HONI SOIT QUI MALY PENSE

Friesland
Weser
Elb
Ems
Alle
Weser
Holland
The Hague
Münster
Stadtlohn
Lippe
Paderborn
Rhine
Maas
Calais
Brussels
Netherlands
Cologne
Ful
Fleurus
Somme
Sambre
Coblenz
Höchst
Frankfurt
Main
Mainz
Amiens
Sedan
Moselle
Mannheim
Rothenbu
Oise
Maas
Lorraine
Palatinate
Heidelberg
Verdun
Saar
Metz
Stuttgart
Marne
Zabern
Württember
Paris
Seine
Danube
Rhine
Yonne
Franche Comté
Constance
Zürich
Switzerlan
Savoy
Milan
Piedmont

Danzig
Vistula
Poland
Oder
Elbe
Brandenburg
Warthe
Küstrin
Posen
Warsaw
Havel
Berlin
Spree
Frankfurt
Magdeburg
Lusatia
Silesia
Breslau
Dresden
Saxony
Neisse
Oder
Eger
White Mountain
Elbe
Main
Prague
Eger
Bohemia
Pilsen
Moravia
Tabor
Moldau
Amberg
Ansbach
Ratisbon
Budweis
Transylvania
(Siebenbürgen)
Augsburg
Isar
Austria
Vienna
Danube
Bavaria
Munich
Lech
Styria
Tyrol
Hungary
Venetian
Republic
Triest

THE WINTER QUEEN

" Qui sait si le rêve d'un poète n'est pas aussi lucide que l'observation ? Et si representer les êtres comme ils furent dans sa vision, n'est pas plus sûre façon de fixer l'expression fugace, où parfois se révèle—le temps d'un éclair—l'intimité d'une âme ?

" Pourquoi n'appartiendraient-ils pas au roman, les personnages qui appartiennent à l'histoire, roman aussi ? "

CATULLE MENDÈS.

Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia.
from a painting by Mierevelt.
in Herr von Weinberg's collection at Frankfurt.

THE WINTER QUEEN

BEING THE UNHAPPY HISTORY OF

ELIZABETH STUART

ELECTRESS PALATINE, QUEEN OF BOHEMIA

A ROMANCE

BY

MARIE HAY

AUTHOR OF 'A GERMAN POMPADOUR' 'DIANNE DE POITIERS' AND 'AN UNREQUITED LOYALTY'

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1910

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

TO

LEILA AND HERBERT

IN MEMORY OF OUR WANDERINGS IN
GERMANY, IN BOHEMIA, IN HOLLAND,
AND IN ENGLAND, WHERE WE SOUGHT
THROUGH THE RECORDS OF
THE SORROWFUL HISTORY OF
HER WELL-BELOVED MAJESTY,
ELIZABETH OF BOHEMIA.

2032927

PREFACE

BECAUSE the Stuart charm, working through the long-dead years, enchained me; and then, because personality is deathless, I fell into a true love for her Majesty of Bohemia. But how it began? Well—a strange thing, and yet, if personality is deathless, not so strange. Wandering through Bohemia, curious to see and perchance to learn, we came to Prague late at night and weary. The next morning I awoke with a sentence ringing in my ears: "The Winter Queen—a sorry history—but so brave—the Winter Queen!" I marvelled, for Prague had held no message for me before, yet had I always felt I needs must journey back to the Czechish city; and now this sentence, "The Winter Queen," haunted me, and seemed a command to me, who, then, knew little of Elizabeth Stuart. Perhaps her spirit, hovering over Bohemia, had come to order me to tell of her sad life. Had some vestige of her charm lingered in Prague? I know not; yet right humbly I set myself to learn the history of my "well-beloved, sweet, undaunted lady," learned it with a new thought of the bravery of cheerfulness through failure and sorrow. And here I have written of what I found in many pilgrimages through Germany, Bohemia, Holland, and our own dear England.

There has been no lack of writings to teach me her Majesty's story; there have been both printed books and a mass of MS. letters; and though I have cast my history in the form of a romance, I here crave my readers' kindness to believe that I have given as much study to my subject as though I had written a biography. And, because I know out of my own curiosity in such matters, how when we read, we desire to know if this or that is actual

fact or but the romancer's invention, I must here affirm that I have the authority of ancient chronicles, of the records of studious searchers through many archives, or of the voice of legend to confirm the details, scenes, and characters of this romance. Sometimes I have been forced to tell of hideous things—of sacrilege and blasphemy, and herein I have added nothing to the telling of the contemporary chroniclers.

In the course of my wanderings it has been my good fortune, by investigation to prove the truth of some traditions. Thus I found a few old men at Amberg who remembered, as children, being taken to see the horse which King Friedrich rode on his flight from Rothenburg to Amberg. In 1620 the citizens had caused poor "Hurry" to be stuffed and set up in their Rathaus, and he remained there till 1835, but then, being badly moth-eaten, he was destroyed. In the Munich "Schatzkammer" I found the Garter which King Friedrich lost at the Strahow Gate after the battle of the White Mountain. The diamond letters of the "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*" had evidently been moved closer together, in order to adjust the Garter to a thin leg, and the marks, where the buckle was fastened, are clearly seen. After months of searching I have been able to establish the fact that none know, that even local tradition in Sedan does not whisper, where King Friedrich of Bohemia is buried.

There remains to me a duty which is a pleasant task: to own my thanks to those whose courtesy has helped me in my search—to my Lord Earl of Craven, who gave me leave to study the Craven papers; to the authorities of the Royal Library at Munich, where I have read many rare books and collections of MS. letters of the seventeenth century; to the librarian of the Bohemian Museum at Prague; and to the librarian of the University Library at Heidelberg.

MARIE HAY.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Her New Highness Palatine	1
II.	Heidelberg	27
III.	Quiet Days	39
IV.	The First Mesh is Spun	68
V.	Warning	81
VI.	The Web	95
VII.	The Great War's Prelude	111
VIII.	Departure	130
IX.	Humiliation	150
X.	King Friedrich's Ride	165
XI.	Prague	175
XII.	The King's Vision	203
XIII.	The White Mountain	222
XIV.	Flight	234
XV.	Holland	252
XVI.	The Supper in the Wood	269
XVII.	"As Never Man hath Loved Before"	280
XVIII.	The Hero of Fleurus	297
XIX.	Farewell	316

CHAP. PAGE

XX. "If Love be Dead, why dost Thou Rise, O Sun?" 333

XXI. Tidings of Despair 346

XXII. The Winter King 363

XXIII. D'Espinay 379

XXIV. Home 403

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA, *by* MIEREVELT . . *Frontispiece*

EQUESTRIAN PICTURE, *by* VAN DER VENNE . . *To face p.* 54

DUKE CHRISTIAN OF BRUNSWICK, *by* MIEREVELT . ,, 264

THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA, *by* HONTHORST . . ,, 347

THE KING OF BOHEMIA, *by* MIEREVELT . . ,, 369

procession, would greet her new Highness Palatine. The master of each guild had spent both anxious thought and hard-earned gold on the embellishment of his house, and not only upon the adornment of his portly spouse and the children it had pleased a mighty bounteous Providence to bestow upon him, but even the 'prentice hands had received fresh doublets and feathers for their caps. Hawkers and pedlars had reaped a harvest of small coin from serving-wenches and the wives of humble artisans, and in the neighbouring villages they had driven a brisk trade with the buxom peasant women, all agog at the tempting gaudiness of riband and rosette, of coloured kerchief, and of beaded hair-nets woven in finest silken cord.

Up at the Castle there had reigned for many days a turmoil of preparation; and all had toiled in their degree, from her Highness Louise Juliane down to the meanest scullion of the kitchen. The ladies with flying fingers had embroidered pennants and emblazoned cushions; the musicians had tuned their instruments and discoursed a hundred melodies in arduous practice; the gardeners had trimmed the primness of the Castle gardens till Spring had some trouble to smile through the strict order which made the trees and plants seem like wooden playthings; the pastrycooks had raised flaky edifices of delicious promise; the baker-master had attended his stupendous oven continuously; the cooks and scullions had builded the most savoury pasties, had roasted half a herd of oxen and nigh upon a flock of sheep; whilst, had the poultry which was a-cooking been flying over Heidelberg, it would have cast a black shadow from the many thousand outstretched wings. The great Tun, celebrated far and wide as the most enormous wine-cask in the world, holding as it did twenty-one pipes of liquid, had been filled to the brim with golden Rhenish wine, and had been set, for the occasion, on one of the castle terraces; while below, the cellars had been stocked anew, barrel upon barrel, to the vaulted roof; yet the cellarer was afeared lest there should not be enough, for there would be nigh upon six thousand throats to be wetted with choice vintages during the coming

festivities. Six thousand guests of all degrees to be feasted for twenty days at the expense of the noble Prince Palatine, at his expense and in his Castle of Heidelberg! True, each day of the year did one thousand persons eat and drink from the bounty of this most wealthy Prince, and twice a year his Highness bestowed a full set of raiment upon his thousand dependants, not counting, of course, the men-at-arms and gentlemen of his guard, who lodged for the most part below in the town, and had their armour and weapons, their rations and small beer, at his Highness's expense. The cellarer was a troubled and yet a proud man, for who could boast so splendid a charge as his? Who administered such a quantity of rare old Sack, of Tokay, of Malvoisie—these choice liquors which he would presently offer to the princes and nobles at the Palatine's own board? Who, save the Duke of Wirtemberg's cellar-master, perchance? But then Stuttgart's was the most lavish of all German Courts. The cellarer sighed, but mentally refused to vie with Wirtemberg's cellarer. The chief gardener had also sighed at the recollection of Stuttgart, for it was notorious that Heidelberg possessed but the second orangery in Germany, copied from that which Duke Christoph of Wirtemberg had caused to be planted in his Lustgarten many years since.

Meanwhile the preparations for the Lady Elizabeth's reception went on apace and with unceasing labour, for the entertainment of princes means the toil of many menials. And on this seventh day of June, Friedrich V. Prince Palatine, would enter his town of Heidelberg in state with his bride.

The first sun-rays had chased away the demure dawn, the birds carolled and twittered in the formal gardens of Heidelberg Castle, and with daylight the toilers redoubled their efforts. The master of the waterworks hurried to set the fountains of the plaisance agoing; gardeners raked the paths afresh with wooden rakes; from behind the Castle came the discordant roar of the wild animals in his Highness's menagerie, disturbed by attendants

entering their cages to redd up and make all fair and sweet, lest evil odours should offend the nostrils of England's fastidious daughter. With a burring sound the flags on the Castle towers flung out on the fresh morning breeze. Even the flags were new, in honour of this grand festival, and the little burring sound denoted the stiffness of the texture of the new silk.

Of a sudden the toilers were startled by the appearance from the Otto Heinrich's Bau of a figure in sombre garments; those who saw her paused in their work and reverentially doffed their caps, but she passed on with hurried steps and returned no word to their salutation.

"She is anxious and afeared of the English lady," a gardener murmured to his companion, as the tall figure passed them, "or she would never pass us by ungreeted, for she is a very gracious dame, her Highness Juliane."

"Well, well," grumbled the other gardener, "it is no marvel if she wonders what her son's beloved will be like! I remember my mother was in a mighty pother when she first saw my old wife; and then, this lady bride is from foreign climes." They fell a-gossiping of many sorry tales which the servants who had attended his Highness into England had brought back to quiet, orderly Heidelberg; ugly stories, part true, part false, retailed in the taverns of Westminster; laughable episodes of his Majesty King James's spoiled doublets; of how the British Solomon slobbered his food and drink out of his loose-lipped, overtongued mouth; hideous insinuations anent his favourites; exaggerated reports of the King's brutal speeches, which, of a truth, needed no magnifying to enhance the original grossness of James's habitual sayings; awestruck whispers of the lavish prodigality and the opulent magnificence of Whitehall; of the drunken carousals at Theobald's.

Her Highness Juliane passed on unconscious of the workers' presence; but could she have heard the men's talk, gentle lady as she was, she would perchance have clapped them into the Hunger Tower—"Selten-oder-nimmer-leer"—as it was called from the grim fact that

within the memory of man it had never lacked lodgers. For what is so discomfiting as to hear our most unpleasant thoughts echoed by the vulgar in those broad phrases which reveal Fact without the decent raiment of Deception, wherewith the elegant of the world clothe the ugly hag Reality? Indeed, her Highness's own mind dwelled on these same accounts of England's ruler and his abode; and her heart misgave her when she recalled the anecdotes of the home of her son's young wife. Yet had she, Juliane, promoted the marriage for ambition's sake, and for the cause of the Reformed Faith; and now the stateswoman and the stern Calvinist fell back into the tender mother, yearning over her son's future, craving happiness for him, and let the world with its fond dreams of pride and avarice, let the religious factions and their fiery theologies go hang! She longed for peace and plenty, for love and joy for her child, and she agonised in her soul, as she had agonised in her flesh, when she had borne him eighteen years ago.

She passed on to the terrace overlooking the town towards Ladenburg, and her eyes strained into the distance where she knew the company of travellers must be—those splendid travellers, Elizabeth Stuart and Friedrich, Prince Palatine—coming in triumph to their ancient Heidelberg. The Countess Juliane leaned her arms on the parapet and gazed upon the beauty of the Spring country. Below her nestled closely the red-brown roofs of the township, and from the city's hearths little spirals of blue smoke arose, betraying the preparation of the burghers' morning meal. The river Neckar flowed away in tranquil beauty between the gentle rise of the blossom-decked hills. Ah God! ah God! would the English princess love and tend Friedrich, the son of her love? She chid herself sternly for her want of trust in God, and her thoughts turned to her own past and the years of peace and happy love which had been hers with Friedrich's father. She recalled her entry into Heidelberg twenty years ago; it had been full summer then, the white glory of the blossom had passed, and the trees stood in all their pride, rich in

fresh green foliage. She remembered how lonely she had felt, how young and uncertain, and how the pageant had struck awe into her heart. Perhaps Elizabeth Stuart was knowing the same pang of strangeness? But no, she came from a Court where pageants and pomp were the things of every day; whereas she, Juliane, had come from quiet Holland, where her life had been ordered by the severe yet cultured Princess Louise de Coligny. There it had been decorum of life, ruled by austere though kindly souls, simplicity and dignity at once. She recollected how in Heidelberg the constant allusion to each noble's genealogical table had dismayed and puzzled her, how she had despaired of comprehending the subtle distinctions between the rank of this Baron and that Count. Here all had been regulated by prescription, by right of ancestry or office, while Juliane had been nurtured in principles of almost republican equality which obtained in the highly civilised states of Holland; but Germany, despite the wealth of both noble and burgher, was less lettered, and therefore incapable of easy, refined social intercourse. In Holland she had been used to daily converse anent learned matters, for Louise de Coligny had brought some of the elegant erudition of France to the Hague. In Heidelberg Juliane had found constant banqueting, much talk of the chase, varied at best by fierce polemics; but learning and culture hid in the universities, and their votaries conversed in Latin, leaving the German tongue to the unlettered. Thus she had found little or no traffic of the mind in her new surroundings. Ah well! things had changed somewhat since then, and she reflected that Elizabeth nowadays would find at least as polished a court in Heidelberg as she had left in England, albeit the pomp and splendour were less. And Friedrich? She had reared him strictly in the stern rule of Calvin; all who had leaned to the laxer teachings of Luther had been banished; no Lutheran tract or treatise had been permitted in the Palatinate, and she had caused those harbouring such light literature to be fined, and the odious writings to be burned by the common hangman.

Yet was Friedrich, withal, no unpolished dullard. She had sent him to France to learn the elegancy of life. God alone knew what it had cost her to part with her son for so much of his youth, but she had permitted and encouraged his prolonged residence at Sedan with her sister's husband, that proud Duc de Bouillon, the pattern of Protestant princes, an ornament, despite his austerity, of the gay court of France.

Yes, Friedrich was a courtly gentleman. Would she love him — this English Princess? "Ah God! just Judge," she prayed, "if it be Thy will, give him happiness. Give my son joy and content—if it be for his salvation," she added hastily, the habit of the Calvinistic conscience coming to correct the human passion of tenderness which surged in the mother's heart. "If it be Thy will, joy and content—if it be Thy will." For a moment she covered her eyes with her hand, shutting out the glory of Spring. Somewhere below in the plain, which spread in blue and hazy distance beyond the encircling hills, there rang out a fanfare of trumpets, and at the same moment behind her she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs. She raised her head to listen, and, turning, saw a line of grooms leading richly caparisoned steeds from the stables across the inner moat towards the castle courtyard. The horses of the princes sojourning at Heidelberg for the festivities were being led to their noble riders, who would forthwith mount and proceed to meet the Palsgrave and his bride at the outskirts of the little city of Ladenburg, where, forming into a magnificent procession, they would escort the bridal pair into Heidelberg.

The Countess Juliane sighed; it irked her to reflect upon the hundred ceremonies Friedrich and the Lady Elizabeth would pass through ere she beheld them. She had waited calmly during the long months since her son's nuptials in England, but her impatience had grown with every sunrise, and while Elizabeth had tarried in Holland with her husband's uncle, Prince Maurice of Orange, it had seemed to Juliane as if each day had

learned a slower tread than the preceding span; and now she was aware of the awful length of hours, the cruel slowness of minutes.

A cavalcade clattered across the drawbridge of the inner moat towards the narrow gateway of the outer wall. A company of princes it was for the most part. First rode his Highness the Duke of Zweibrücken, who by virtue of his close kinship had been the Administrator of the Palatinate, a title he still bore pending Prince Friedrich's attainment of his majority. There rode old Duke Christian of Anhalt, stern warrior, and ruthless antagonist of the House of Hapsburg. Then came the magnificent Duke of Wirtemberg and his brothers; and, gayer than all, Duke Magnus of Wirtemberg, a thoughtless youth, famous at the German Courts for his pranks and clown-like pleasantries. Prince Louis Philip, Count Palatine, Juliane's youngest son, rode beside Prince Christian the younger of Anhalt, and the Markgraves of Anspach and Brandenburg; then there were my Lords of Handschuhsheim, of Hirshhorn, of Minneburg, of Zwingenberg; and that Count of Steinach whose forbears had won by their robber deeds the proud title of Landschad (land-despoiler), a grim name now borne as a mark of high and old nobility. There, too, was the Count of Diebsberg, descendant of another famous robber baron, as the name denotes. The cortège was followed by a troop of pages and esquires, cadets of noble families.

Juliane heard the younger men's voices raised in pleasantry; through the filmy tracery of the leaves of the beech trees at the end of the terrace she saw the flash of burnished breastplates, for the riders were all in full battle array in honour of the mock warfare which would be the chief feature of Elizabeth's reception. Her face darkened, for she hated and despised sham battles, feared them, too, since the day her husband's young kinsman and friend, Louis Philip, the namesake of that gay young prince just ridden by, had received his death-wound in a tourney here at Heidelberg. She shuddered when she recalled the dark hours she had spent, when,

still weak from childbirth, she had attended the gorgeous festivities, and had witnessed the sinister ending of that fine tournament given in the babe's honour. All the superstitious terrors of that omen-tortured age had rioted in the young mother's soul, and when, two days after the prince's death, a furious earthquake had caused the towers of Heidelberg to rock and sway, she had responded by an agony of fear to the stern preachings of the Calvinist divines, who had thundered warning and condemnation upon the light pleasures of mock battles, of earthly pomp, and boisterous feastings, calling the prince's death a just retribution for such sinful joustings, and affirming the earthquake to be a portent of the righteous wrath of an outraged God.

She asked herself now if these ceremonious rejoicings, this display of human power and splendour, this magnificent panoply of warfare exhibited for the lust of earthly pomp were not an insult to God, a thing of evil import, a dire offence? And for this fool feasting, for these hollow glories, was her Friedrich risking the happy presage of his youthful joy?

Below in the town the clock of the Heilig Geist Church tolled the hour. Juliane started. Could it be so late? She marvelled that the leaden-footed hours had passed so swiftly. Once more she chid herself for a timorous woman, weak in trust of the Almighty's clemency, for she clung to the mercy of God although she had been taught to remember chiefly His wrath and His eternal vengeance. With an effort she withdrew her thoughts from doleful ponderings, and turning from the terrace parapet she walked rapidly through the narrow garden, past the Hunger Thurm, and over the inner drawbridge into the courtyard. Everywhere she was met with veneration, even the sentries at the gate received her not only with the ordinary salute of honour, but with friendly though respectful greeting. She was not proud, this noble Princess of Orange, save with that unconscious pride of dignity, which the humble and the simple love and answer to with freely given reverence and good affec-

tion. God wot! her Highness could reprove and utterly discomfit a forward wench, a pert youth, or a presumptuous burgher; but with the simple she was simple, be they soldier or serving-maid, prince or noble dame.

Now, having banished dark thoughts and forebodings, her quick and housewifely eye probed each detail of domestic labour. She cast a searching glance round the courtyard, reproved a slatternly serving-man who had spilled water from the fountain on to the steps of the Otto Heinrich's Bau; inquired why a dirty clout fluttered from one of the windows of the "Kemenate"; sent an urgent message to the kitchen desiring the master of the roast to watch, lest some careless turnspit should allow burning fat to fester on the bars of the huge open fireplace and diffuse ill odours through the yard. "Must her new Highness Palatine be greeted with the ugly stench of roasting viands as though she entered a tavern instead of her own castle?" she queried. "She, to whom I would offer only the fragrance of roses to perfume all her days and fill her soul with sweetness," she murmured to herself as she passed on.

In the Friedrich's Bau, where lay the lodging of the Lady Elizabeth, all appeared well and duly ordered. The Countess Juliane shrank momentarily from a sharp stab of memory as she beheld the spacious apartments, for here had she dwelt for many years until a few weeks back, when she had changed her domicile to the Otto Heinrich's Bau. She had not lived here as a young bride, for the Friedrich's Bau had been built by her husband's command in the halcyon days of their wedded life; but she had spent a few years with her spouse in peace in this fair dwelling-place; and the solemn hours of her widow's mourning had been passed here. She felt as though her grief and sorrowful communings had consecrated these walls, and turned each chamber into a quiet sanctuary. Yet she had deemed this more sumptuous habitation to be better fitted for the reigning Princess Palatine than for the deposed châtelaine, and no jealous pang had stirred in her when she had owned

herself dethroned. Friedrich's wife could not appear to her as an usurper, but as a rightful ruler come to claim her own glad heritage. Still Juliane had grieved at leaving her abode, and she sighed as she passed through the rooms.

The windows of the Lady Elizabeth's apartments lay in shadow, and the Countess Juliane consulted her memory anxiously as to whether the sun would shine into the rooms at the hour of her new Highness Palatine's arrival. Surely yes, at midday the Friedrich's Bau was wont to be flooded with sunshine. She rejoiced that it should be so.

Her Highness's rooms were four in number, and led from the broad, marbled corridor looking out on the courtyard, whilst the chamber-windows opened on to a grand view of terraced garden, and far below the deep valley with the red roofs of the city houses; then, the tranquil progress of the river Neckar; and beyond, as a boundary to vision, the long line of the blossom-covered Heiligenberg.

The Countess Juliane stood for a moment at the window of the first room, or ante-hall, where the gentlemen and pages of the suite were wont to wait. On the broad, open hearth there blazed a fire of beech logs, for albeit June had come, Spring had been but a tardy visitant that year, and a chill lingered over the world. Juliane passed into her Highness's own antechamber, destined for the use of the ladies of Elizabeth's suite, a splendid room enough, with marbled floor and panelled walls. A high green porcelain stove stood in one corner, and here was a niche between the stove and the wall with a quaint seat wrought in the same coloured faience, where Friedrich as a little boy had loved to sit, cowering close to the warmth on winter evenings. She had rallied him often, calling him "Master Dormouse," "Little Prince Shiverkin," and the like; but her ladies had ever prayed her spare him to them, vowing that he was better than any troubadour of old, and that he told them wondrous tales of martial deeds while he sat so warmly in the stove corner. Ah!

he had been a winsome child, her Friedrich; sure the English Princess must needs love him now that he had reached so fair a manhood?

She went on into her Highness's audience-chamber and withdrawing-room, a gorgeous apartment with glowing tapestries on the walls between the panels. Tall carven chairs with cushioned seats stood here, and before one was a small tabouret with a silk-embroidered centre, which Friedrich himself had commanded to be placed before her Highness's chair, having seen such conceits in Danish Anne's luxurious apartments at Westminster. The last room of the suite was the Lady Elizabeth's bedchamber, and, as Juliane entered, it struck her as of happy augury that the room was flooded with sunshine. It faced north-east, and thus the sun on his progress had hastened to smile into the Princess's apartments. So Juliane told herself, with that touch of poetic exaggeration which lives for ever in the soul of one to whom God has vouchsafed the gift of deep affection, be it a lover extolling his beloved, or a mother yearning over her child's happiness. Her Highness's sleeping-chamber was hung with golden brocade, and the four-poster bed was sheltered by silken curtains of golden damask. Here, too, on the wide hearth beech logs flamed.

Juliane bent with an impulse of tenderness and laid her lips on the stiffly embroidered coverlet upon the bed. In that mother-kiss she gave a welcome and a blessing to the stranger—to the English Princess, in whose hands was Friedrich's destiny, and in whose keeping was the faithful love of his heart as Juliane had seen both by her son's letters from England, and by his words and actions during the hasty visit he had paid to Heidelberg to inspect the arrangements for his bride's reception. Opening a narrow door, Juliane looked into her Highness's closet or tiring-room. Here stood the silver washing vessels which the Duchesse de Bouillon had sent out of France, the basin and ewer, the chased perfume-flagons and hairbrushes.

All was in order for the Pearl of England's reception.

Once more Juliane gazed from the window on the familiar landscape. "It is very fair, this land," she told herself; "will she love it too, and give my son content in the home of his fathers?"

As she gazed at the smiling valley she reflected that, perhaps, Spring had waited so that his masterpiece of bloom should be still there for the land's greeting to Elizabeth Stuart. "A fitting bridal wreath on hill and vale; a right fair coronal for my sweet Friedrich's love!" she murmured, as she gazed on the white beauty of the blossom-crowned country.

"Madame!" a voice broke in on her reverie—"Madame, despite your orders to be undisturbed this morning, I must e'en venture to recall the hour to you."

It was one of her ladies who stood beside her. "Be not angered, Madame, for indeed the day grows apace, and it is time your Highness robed herself for the procession."

"Is it so late? Come, let us hasten," Juliane answered gently. "It is a very fair and gracious day to me when I can hasten to meet my Friedrich's well-beloved lady."

. . . . . .

In the town of Heidelberg excitement and expectation had reached a point of strained attention which was almost anguish. Not alone was it the curiosity of a gaping crowd which would be satisfied by the sight of a splendid pageant, it was the anxious expectation of a people to behold a princess upon whose goodwill much of their future welfare depended; and more, it was the affectionate solicitude of loyal friends and trusty retainers seeing for the first time the woman destined to make or mar the happiness of a beloved lord and ruler. Friedrich of the Palatinate was the cherished jewel of his people; they had seen him grow from infancy to manhood; they had grieved with the Countess Juliane during his absences at Sedan; they had welcomed him on his return, marking with interest his growth, and sharing the mother's pride in the debonair youth's progress. His father, Friedrich IV., had been an honoured and much mourned master, but Friedrich V.

was the son of the people's affection. It was, indeed, a critical audience before which Elizabeth Stuart was to play the first act of her life's drama. True, she had sustained a prominent rôle in that gorgeous prologue, the pageantry in England, but that had been among her own people and in a familiar setting, where folks forgot to note the chief actors in their wonder at the lavish costliness of the mounting of the play.

In spite of the gloom which the death of Prince Henry, James's eldest son, the "verrie deere brother and firm friend" of Elizabeth Stuart, had cast over England, the wedding festivities had been on a scale of magnificence which had not only appalled the Puritans, but even the nobles and courtiers had stood aghast at so vast an outlay of state-needed gold. One hundred and forty thousand pounds were reported to have been spent upon the espousals alone, and the Lady Elizabeth's dowry had doubled that sum. It was whispered that her Highness's wedding raiment had cost a duke's revenue; her white satin gown had been so heavily broidered in silver that she could scarce stand; upon her head she had borne a crown of refined gold studded and embossed with giant pearls and diamonds, standing like shining pinnacles over her "deep amber-coloured" hair, which had hung in massive plaits to her waist, and between the braiding of each plait had been chains of gold, pearls, diamonds, and rubies. The Puritans had said bitterly that the British Solomon had outdone the King of Israel in his glory, even if he could not henceforward lay claim to the wisdom of the Jewish monarch! James had shambled through the ceremonies with jewels about his neck and on his breast worth a hundred thousand pounds; while Anne of Denmark had shone modestly in gems valued at a trifling four hundred thousand pounds. The wedding anthem had been: "Blessed is he that feareth the Lord," and the Puritans had murmured that the God-fearing man did not waste his substance upon earthly pomp, upon gauds and shining baubles. Yet even they, the stern, cruel men who had hounded Marie

Stuart to imprisonment and death, had well-nigh pardoned James for his prodigality when they had remembered Elizabeth's mission upon earth; and those who had seen her had joined in the eulogy of her beauty, that heavenly radiance which they averred shone from her face and betokened the especial grace of God. Already all men, even the Puritans, fell under the magic of her smile, though they ascribed their faltering to the divine favour impressed upon one destined to serve God's elect, and to further the uprooting of the Church of Antichrist.

Thus England had sent forth her royal daughter with a very halo of romance, an almost legendary splendour of unparalleled magnificence calculated to stir the imagination of all Europe.

The grave burghers of Heidelberg were well aware of the political importance of their Prince's union; the sincere votaries of the Reformed Faith looked upon it as an earnest of the triumph of Calvin's doctrines. To them, as to the English Puritans, she was God's own chosen handmaiden, the especial instrument of destiny.

To the good people of the Palatinate she was their new lady, the consort of a beloved ruler; to the youthful members of the community she seemed a queen of romance stepped living from one of those fond histories of doughty deeds, chivalrous knights, fair ladyes, passionate devotion, and glorious-gallantry—those sweet and merry stories so harshly banished from the dull shelves of the Calvinists' libraries, but enshrined in the hearts of all romantic youths.

Elizabeth Stuart's journey from England commenced on the twenty-first day of April, but the elements rose in anger when the Pearl of England was ravished from her "ain countree"; in other words, a furious storm drove the fleet back to the British coast, and it was only on the twenty-eighth day that her Highness was safely landed in Holland. Prince Maurice of Orange, more solicitous than Elizabeth's own father, who by that time was returned to his orgies at Theobald's, had despatched one Master Samuel More, his

chief navigator, to pilot her Highness's ships through the dangerous sandbanks and hidden shoals off the Dutch coast, and the gallant company had arrived without mishap. Nevertheless there were not wanting in doleful presagers who whispered that to be obliged to turn back on a voyage was an ill omen; but these sinister rumours were forgotten in the rejoicings which Prince Maurice and the States of Holland offered in homage to the splendid wayfarers. It seemed as though Prince Maurice, who usually affected an almost boorish simplicity of dress and manners, had fallen from the outset under Elizabeth Stuart's spell; and the Dutch burghers and substantial merchants followed their Stadthouder's example, and rendered an almost frenzied homage to the English Princess. Banquets and processions, music, and representations of French comedies were the order of the hour; and, what pleased her Highness more than these, a succession of hunting-parties, where Elizabeth herself shot several stags. Her prowess was duly recorded in the chronicles of the day in France, Germany, and England, wherein she was lauded as a very Diana. Seemingly Prince Maurice of Orange could not part with his young kinswoman, and Friedrich, having hurried on to Heidelberg to inspect the arrangements for Elizabeth's home-coming, Prince Maurice gallantly escorted her through the States and into Germany. At every town she was feasted and sumptuously entertained, and each city vied with the other in the lavishness of their gifts and the prolixity of their orations in her honour. At length, having reached Cologne with his fair charge, Prince Maurice took his leave, and Elizabeth continued her progress unattended, save by the hundred and eighty-eight persons she had brought with her out of England. The roads being notoriously unfit for heavy coaches, it was decided at Cologne that her Highness should proceed by ship up the Rhine. When she approached the water's edge she found no ordinary State vessels, but a fairy fleet, awaiting her. Elizabeth's own barge was built in the shape of an altar, a gilded lion

stood at the prow, and a golden figure representing Fortuna was at the stern. The sails were of golden damask; the flags of red, gold, and blue silk, grandly broidered with the arms of England. A royal-blue pennant fluttered over her Highness's baldaquin, with the device, "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Blue and crimson velvet hangings and carpets covered the bows and deck, and the roof of the baldaquin was of blue velvet to represent the sky, and the stars thereon were wrought in pure gold, This magic barge was followed by three other fine ships for the accommodation of her Highness's suite.

In stately procession the fleet sailed up the Rhine. Fortunately for the voyagers in their sumptuous barges the heavens smiled, and neither rain nor wind came to destroy the beauty of Friedrich's extravagant homage; and Elizabeth could thrill at the poetical devotion of so romantically lavish a lord and lover. Her Highness observed that her fairy fleet was followed by a substantial vessel of unpretending dimensions and with no fairy-like adornments, but solid and well covered; and it caused her to smile when she was told that the Countess Juliane had despatched this craft, unknown to Friedrich, fearing lest the weather should prove inclement, and Elizabeth should be rewarded with drenched raiment for her trust in her love-sick lord's arrangements.

Yet, despite the smiles of the heavens, the splendour of the progress, the constant pleasure of hearing and responding to the orations which city and even village magnates proclaimed from the banks of the Rhine to the slow-moving and constantly hindered fairy fleet, the Lady Elizabeth had grown right weary of ceremony and travel; and even the converse of her honoured companions, the Earl and Countess of Harrington, the noble Duke of Lennox, Viscount Leslie, Lord Arundell, Sir Edward Cecil, and of her own close friend Mistress Anne Dudley, failed to relieve the tedium of the protracted journey. When, on a sudden, through the flowering fields near Bacharach, a group of gaily attired horsemen appeared on the river banks, and Friedrich Prince Palatine, weary

of ceremonies and impatient to behold his loved lady, had ridden forth to greet her. The fairy fleet hove to, and his Highness boarded the royal barge.

"My lord! my lord! this is indeed a happy day," Elizabeth said, and a trifle abashed she was at this amorous impatience shown before so mighty a concourse of people, and in the midst of so ceremonious a progress.

"Be not wroth, sweet queen of my heart," he whispered; "I could wait no longer! Methought the day had a hundred hours, and the night a million years while I was far from you," and he drew her, unresisting, into her curtained baldaquin.

Perhaps because all the world loves a lover, and the human heart is ever stirred by the homage of a fine youth for his beloved, the enthusiasm for the Lady Elizabeth was increased tenfold by the rumour that her deeply enamoured spouse had broken the bonds of ceremony and flown to meet his love. Popular acclamation redoubled, and the citizens of each town through which the bridal cortège passed grew more than ever vociferous in plaudits, more lavish in costly gifts; and, alas! waxed more profuse in oration and laudatory verse. Oppenheim, the first Palatine city which Elizabeth entered, outdid all other towns in music, garlands, quaint processions, triumphal arches, banquets, and—orations, until her Highness was near done to death by too much kindness! Still love, the sun, and the spring country smiled, and the world seemed very fair to her.

And on this seventh day of June she was to enter Heidelberg. It was whispered through the waiting crowd that though Prince Friedrich had dutifully returned from Oppenheim according to ancient custom to receive his bride in state upon her entry into his domains, he had hastened to his beloved secretly the preceding night, and though he would greet her formally at Ladenburg he had not ridden forth that morning from Heidelberg with the other princes; and, in truth, he would but have quitted the Lady Elizabeth for a few short hours before he bade her welcome publicly. This delighted the public exceed-

ingly; the maidens sighed and wished for themselves so ardent a lover; the old dames smiled and recalled their own long-vanished courting days; while the men pondered on how sweet a lady this must be for a man to love her so madly.

At last there fell on the listening ears the boom of cannon, the royal salute at Ladenburg. Again and again Echo caught the sound and rolled it round in rumbling grandeur between the hills. Now, on a sudden, there was a loud blast of trumpets in the valley near by, and my Lord Seneschal appeared with two hundred red-clad, mounted lackeys and finely habited equerries to clear the way for the procession. The Lord Chief Huntsman followed with a goodly company of green-coated hunters, hawkers, and falconers. The Palatine's chief retainers marched next, with gilded badges on their caps and scarves of sky-blue silk across their breasts. Then rode a bevy of nobles of the land in full battle array, with clank of steel and martial air, each lord, as in another age, preceded by his squire bearing a banner emblazoned with heraldic devices. There were the Counts of Hohenlohe, of Nassau, of Sarbrücken, of Witgenstein, of Löwenstein, and many other proud nobles of Germany, riding splendid, richly caparisoned steeds. Lesser nobles followed —a brave and merry train. After these, in companies, the followers of each prince: of the young princes of Wirtemberg, of Anhalt, of the Rhenish Palatinate, of Brandenburg, Anspach, Baden, and the rest, in the liveries and uniforms of each royal house. There came bands of trumpeters and several regiments of musketeers, of halberdiers, and mounted soldiery; and if these were for the most part mercenaries and professional adventurers it mattered not, they made a gallant show. Again a body of trumpeters marched past, and then there rode the heralds wearing the sumptuous red and gold embroidered tabards of their office. After these came a troop of horsemen armed cap-à-pie in burnished steel; and then, slowly, a great gilded coach hove in sight. A breathless stillness fell on the crowd, an almost awestruck

silence, for now that the long-awaited moment was at hand it seemed sudden—startling. The swaying vehicle with its snow-white horses came slowly onward.

"Keep back from the coach's window, dear Pfalzgraf," called an aged gaffer. "Keep back, your dear Highness, that we may see your lady's face."

And Prince Friedrich, sweeping his plumed hat from his head in a courtly salute, cried loudly: "Ye do well, my friends, to wish to see our fair pearl of loveliness!" and he reined back his prancing steed from beside the coach-window so that Elizabeth's sweet, haunting face was seen by all. There came a sigh of very wonder from all beholders, a moment's stillness as of prayer, then from ten thousand lips a cry burst forth: "Hail! hail! Elizabeth! Hail to the Pearl of England! Hail and welcome, lady, to this land!"

Near the coach rode a group of youthful princes, a young Duke of Wirtemberg, Prince Louis Philip of the Palatinate, and Prince Christian of Anhalt the younger. These had defied the trammels of ceremonious custom which assigned them places in the cortège of princes, and had craved leave to act as the Lady Elizabeth's especial guard; and Prince Friedrich, who had refused to occupy his appointed place in a second gilded coach, had upheld the chivalrous gentlemen in their petition and had himself led this noble escort beside her Highness's chariot.

After Elizabeth's carriage came several ponderous, heavily decorated coaches wherein the most illustrious of the English visitors were seated, and in serried ranks her Highness's retinue followed: English divines, secretaries and pages, physicians and surgeons, trencher-bearers, cellarers, English cooks, bakers and scullions, wardrobe men and maids, tailors and broiderers, furriers, shoemakers, and many lackeys; and even her Highness's own laundresses had come with her out of England; and, of course, her tiring-women, her hairdressers and other personal attendants, and a stud of horses with their drivers, grooms, ostlers, sumptermen. Each of the Lady Elizabeth's ladies had a dozen flunkeys and serving-

wenches, each noble guest had half a hundred retainers and their servants' servants. Indeed, the procession looked mighty like the arrival of an invading army, whose straggling line reached a couple of miles along the road, and afforded much diversion to the Heidelberg burghers for many hours.

Elizabeth's way was strewn with roses, and the houses were so decked with green or flowering branches that the city seemed a very bower. Everywhere slender sprays of lilac, and clustering garlands of white May-blossom filled the air with delicate fragrance. Little children and young maidens held up bloom-covered branches, youths and men waved green boughs; and, if there was a sad face or an unsightly cripple in Heidelberg, that day sorrow and weakness seemed banished, and only spring, beauty, gaiety, and happiness came forth to meet Elizabeth Stuart. And she gave the people of the magic of her smile; and when, at the first triumphal archway she responded to the reverent Burgomaster's long oration in a few words of halting German, the enthusiasm of the populace broke forth again in tremendous applause.

"Where learned you these German sayings, dear heart?" Friedrich whispered, bending from his saddle.

"Your kinsman, Christian of Anhalt, taught me them while we tarried at Ladenburg to-day," she answered gaily.

"Ah, Christian! you dare to woo her Highness?" Friedrich laughed, as he drew back behind the coach to leave Elizabeth in view of the crowd.

"Who would not woo her? He must be a churl indeed who does not worship the potent magic of her glance," the youth answered, with a flush on his beardless cheek.

Slowly the long cortège moved forward, until it came to the last and most ornate of the many triumphal arches which Heidelberg had raised to honour their new Pfalzgräfin. Here the procession halted. The arch was a fine pillared structure, and was decked with branches torn from his Highness's orangery, and with other strange foreign plants and tall white lilies. In the middle was a

gallery where musicians discoursed sweet music from lutes, violins, and flutes. From out the encircling laurel garlands peeped pictures of the Reformers, Melanchthon, Luther, and Calvin; and below them were statues of the four Evangelists; while enthroned on the summit of the arch was a mythological figure representing Juno, goddess of conjugal fidelity. This heterogeneous collection of symbols was alluded to in a long Latin oration pronounced by the venerable Lord Rector of Heidelberg University, and it was only among the group of eminent scholars who accompanied his Reverence that the ill-chosen significance of the symbolic conceits was noticed; but these gentlemen marvelled that Juno had been selected for comparison, as it was well known that though the goddess protected marriage, her own wedded bliss had been but a sorry spectacle. Then, too, it displeased the learned doctors to see the depictments of Luther and Calvin together, for that doctrine which the one had taught was abominable to the other, and the simultaneous presentment of their lineaments was a portent of lax broadness of thought which could surely never be encouraged by earnest men. Then, too, the presence of frivolous music was but ill suited to an archway representing such grave matters as religion and wedded fidelity. While these murmurs ran through the group of black-gowned divines, the Lord Rector poured forth a volume of eulogy, of theological subtleties and mythological absurdities which, perchance, fell familiarly on the hearing of the Lady Elizabeth, for she was but too well used to her father's, James the Pedant's, endless diatribes, to do aught save weary a trifle. The excellent discourse ended, for all things end when they have exacted their full tax of human weariness.

Then followed a pretty conceit: a child personating Cupid came forward and offered her Highness a gilt basket laden with fruit, and decorated with so generous a profusion of roses and white lilies that Cupid himself was half hidden.

"Madame!" the child's voice came shrilly, "Madame,

la Déesse Flora et la Déesse Polmona vous saluent et vous souhaitent toute Bénédiction et Félicité, elles vous envoient cette corbeille."

"Ah! Lift the little one up, my lords, that I may thank him right worthily!" cried the Lady Elizabeth. And one of the attendant gentlemen lifted the child to the level of the coach's window.

"Mesdames les Déesses ont un bien joli messager!" she said; and, bending through the window, she laid her fresh lips on the child's brow. A woman in the crowd broke forth into a sob of delight, and again a mighty cry went up of: "Hail! our Elizabeth! Hail! sweet, gracious lady!"

Now was to be enacted the climax of the day's ceremonies. It had been arranged that as her Highness passed through the last archway a crown of refined gold and precious gems should be lowered on to her coach; it had been contrived that this diadem should be firmly fastened with rivets prepared on the carriage, and that thus gloriously crowned her Highness should enter the Castle of Heidelberg. Two young boys habited in flowing white draperies and with golden wings on their shoulders were to lower this crown from the archway with silken cords, and two tall youths arrayed in full mediæval armour representing the Paladins of old, were ordered to reach up and fasten the sacred symbol firmly on to the vehicle's roof with the rivets. Now it must be recollected that during the Lord Rector's copious oration and the manifold ceremonies of the long morning, her Highness's coach-horses had stood in the midst of a cheering crowd, and already during the last halt they had trembled and started, and it had required all their grooms' blandishments to keep them quiet; now they proved restive, and despite their leaders' efforts they started violently forward, dragging the heavy coach joltingly along. The crown, which had just been lowered, was flung off the coach-roof and hurled into the flower-strewn road. Like some piteous dead thing it lay in a grave of flowers.

A groan of horror went up from the watching crowd. "The crown has fallen!" "It is an ill omen!" "It

means an evil fate!" "Ill omen! ill omen!" ran from lip to lip. Yet, ere the whisper ceased, another fearsome thing befell, for Prince Friedrich's horse, grown restive too, reared and strained at the bit. In vain his Highness endeavoured to pacify the frightened animal, which plunged wildly forward between the men who had rushed to save the crown. The charger's forelegs became entangled in the long silken cords which hung limp and useless from the archway, and in an instant horse and rider were struggling on the ground, with the crown crushed beneath them.

A brief scene of the utmost confusion ensued; the other princes' steeds, affrighted too, reared and kicked violently, while the panic-stricken mob surged forward. An arquebusier by mistake discharged his weapon, and some one in the crowd raised a cry of "Murder!"

"Silence! silence!" cried Prince Friedrich loudly, as, aided by his attendants, he freed himself from the struggling horse.

"Silence! See, it is nothing! I am unhurt, and even poor Warflame is none the worse," he said, as he stroked the charger, who now stood quietly, though with wild eyes and trembling flanks.

"And now, my lords!" he cried, turning to the other cavaliers, "now let us ride on apace, for her Highness will be disturbed by our absence." He remounted and rode rapidly onwards, followed by the princes.

The Lady Elizabeth, in her gilded coach, had seen nothing of all this. She was smiling serenely, and, when Prince Friedrich appeared at her carriage-door, she rallied him gaily on his dallying. And so the cortège passed on its way right merrily; but there was a shadow on the souls of many who had beheld the ungainly incident, and men whispered that Destiny had sent a warning of disaster to Heidelberg that day.

Slowly the coach ascended the steep, narrow road from the town to the castle, but at length the first drawbridge was reached, and in thunderous voices the cannon proclaimed that the new Princess Palatine had entered the

precincts of her sumptuous stronghold. The splendid train wound its way to the inner keep. At the second drawbridge Elizabeth was greeted with a flare of trumpets, and as her coach rumbled under the ancient stone archway, salvo upon salvo of cannon rent the air, and the sound flew on the wings of Echo and rolled in a hundred phantom salutes through the valley between the long, low hills.

Now came the moment whereon the Countess Juliane had waited in such yearning of spirit. Ceremony's iron hand had lain heavy upon the mother's heart, and this same dull tyrant had ordained that she should greet her son's wife only after the bride had crossed the castle's threshold. Juliane had longed to welcome the Lady Elizabeth at the door of the Saalbau, but Ceremony had leagued with another tyrant, Custom, and had decreed that the meeting-place should be in the Hall of Mirrors. And so the Countess-Dowager, at the head of a bevy of princesses, stood waiting in the centre of the hall. Below, at the door of the Saalbau, Elizabeth was received by the first nobles of the land, and was escorted in state up the winding stairway.

The Lord-Marshal entered the hall first. He smote the marbled floor three times with his staff of office, and proclaimed in ringing tones the arrival of: "The Lady Elizabeth, Princess of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France, Countess Palatine, our gracious Lord Friedrich's most noble spouse."

For an instant Elizabeth Stuart stood on the threshold, while the assembled princesses and ladies of high degree bent low in ceremonious greeting. Her Highness responded with a profound obeisance, but her eyes sought the tall, dark-robed figure which stood immovable in the midst of the bowing group. Elizabeth stepped forward and again bent low, this time only to the Countess Juliane, and there shone on her face the magic of that slow smile for which thousands of gallant men have died, which poets of all centuries have sung, and which haunts the world's memory long after the doomed race of Stuart has

perished. And the Countess Juliane, touched by the sweet witchery of Elizabeth Stuart's smile, defying Ceremony and banishing Custom, came forward with hands outstretched.

"Welcome! welcome, madame!" she said aloud. And drawing Elizabeth to her heart, she murmured brokenly: "Ah! my child, be good to him, for all his soul is yours to make or mar."

"I love him well, madame ma mère," Elizabeth whispered back; "and, if God wills it, I shall be for ever his faithful wife and right good friend."

"God help you to it, madame ma fille," Juliane answered solemnly.

CHAPTER II

HEIDELBERG

"Le repos est un meuble qui ne se trouve pas ès grandes cours où la foule et l'embarras habitent!"—SPANHEIM.

THE first few days of Elizabeth Stuart's sojourn in Heidelberg were restless with continuous pageants and merrymakings, and she could have found it in her heart to wish for some quiet hours when she could forget that she was the first player in a great drama, a little span of time wherein she could be but a young and happily wedded wife and not a princess of political importance. Indeed, the eyes of all Europe scrutinised the new Princess Palatine, for she was the living link between Protestant England and Reformed Germany. The Calvinists regarded her as one on a side path towards salvation, and if she were not walking in the narrow and only way, at least she was approaching thereunto; for the Church of England, though unfortunately Lutheran in doctrine, was yet an ally of the English Puritans or Calvinists, those bulwarks of the ship of God. The Lutherans looked to her as to one of their own faith who would protect them from their hated brethren in Christ, the Calvinists. The Catholic world viewed her as a new power of evil, as a worldly strength gained by the heretics, and yet they watched narrowly, for, Anne of Denmark having returned to the only fold of the Catholic Shepherd, it might fall out that so young a princess had inherited a little of her mother's bias towards Rome. In Austria's vision the balance of European power was dangerously listed to the Protestant side by this union. France viewed the matter calmly, as, at present, her interests were not deeply involved. Spain cast glances of sombre

hatred towards Heidelberg, for it had been the dream of her most astute politicians to unite the widower Philip III. and Elizabeth Stuart, and thus establish the right of Spain to the Kingdom of England. In this scheme lay increase of power for Spain and the stamping out of heresy in the British Isles. Anne of Denmark had striven to promote the match, partly because she was secretly a Catholic, but chiefly because she yearned with all the beautiful instincts of the ambitious mother's heart to see her daughter a Queen. Anne had been willing to give her child to the hereditary enemy of Denmark, Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden—anything better than that this daughter of kings should wed a paltry German prince!

"My daughter to be Goody Palsgrave!" she had cried. "Perish the thought, dear heart!" This to the British Solomon, most ungainly, sure, of all the "dear hearts" which the whimsies of wifely nomenclature have endowed with this name!

But "dear heart James" had proved obstinate; and though he coquetted with Spain, and wrote letters to France for the affiancing of his Elizabeth with the young Louis XIII., though he even waxed eloquent on his fatherly love prompting him to keep his daughter unwed to be a future virgin queen—an Elizabeth II. of England —he had really always meant to give her to the Prince Palatine. And so he sent her off at last, as the fair link of Protestantism, God's chosen vessel, and armed with strict injunctions to give precedence to none save queens and empresses, an she chanced to meet such in life's path. So the sweet youth of Elizabeth Stuart was heavily weighted by political considerations; yet if she wearied sometimes of her overwhelming rôle she gave no sign thereof, and seemed a right merry, gracious lady, enjoying to the full the cup of love and happiness which life held to her lips.

The wedding festivities ended with a grand tourney, recalling the chivalrous days of old; but the spirit of the age was far different from that which drew the valiant

to the lists in bygone centuries. No longer did each knight seek honourable advancement by mighty deeds of prowess; no longer was the guerdon the favour of some fair lady, or the achievement of renown and chivalrous fame. In the seventeenth century the prizes were large sums of money; and though the tourney was a sport involving a certain degree of personal risk, and demanding good horsemanship, courage, and skill, yet was it withal but a charming conceit, a graceful mumming to adopt the rules of chivalry and play at the manners of knightly days. Yet chivalry is an instinct of the human heart, and especially of young, ardent, and enamoured hearts, and the princes and nobles at Heidelberg played their parts with zest. Already Elizabeth Stuart had conquered a small army of impassioned votaries; it was ever her destiny to inspire devotion, and not a few of those who had seen her enter her town of Heidelberg had secretly vowed her a romantic fealty. And here at the tourney they might offer her their homage without fear of seeming importunate. By the rules of chivalry they were bound to lay the reward of their success at the feet of some fair lady, bound to offer to a woman this token of their worship of womanhood.

Mistress Anne Dudley, her Highness's lady-in-waiting and close friend, had been besieged by gallants, who begged to be told what would be her Highness's colours for that day; and finding Mistress Anne but too discreet, the gentlemen had not scrupled to invoke the aid of the Princess's tiring-women. But these damsels, standing in awe of Mistress Anne's displeasure, had also proved obdurate; and none knowing what were her Highness's colours, many knights had ridden forth without silken scarves across their breasts, or rosettes to deck their helmets.

A vast concourse of gaily clad townsfolk stood against the barriers round the lists, and there was not wanting in eager sightseers from the countryside, whose peasant dress added to the varied collection of quaint costume. By her new Highness Palatine's own desire, all who came were to be permitted to see what they could of the jousting.

"Must you charm even the villeins by your sweet thought for them, beloved?" Prince Friedrich had asked when the Lady Elizabeth had proffered this request.

"Her Highness is but too full of gracious condescension," had grumbled Count Schomberg, her lord-marshal. "It will be a hard task to arrange for all the rabble to be allowed to peep at the lists."

Yet Count Schomberg had been easily silenced by a glance from fair Mistress Anne Dudley, who had stolen his heart when he went into England with his Highness. Thus it fell out that a great crowd stood and watched the jousting, and the Lady Elizabeth was lauded as the most gracious lady in all the world.

In the centre of the long wooden gallery which had been built round the lists, her Highness and her ladies were seated beneath a wide, crimson, silken canopy. The Lady Harrington was there, the new Princess Palatine's former governess and faithful friend; my Lord Harrington too, a grave and learned nobleman, who had been one of the brightest ornaments of the Elizabethan Court, and had dedicated his life to the service of Queen Elizabeth's godchild, Elizabeth Stuart. For James had chosen his mother's murderess to be godmother to his eldest daughter. True, Queen Elizabeth had been his own godmother, but that had been in the vanished days of Scotch and English pseudo-friendship; and when James prayed her to be "gossip and name-mither to the bairn," Marie Stuart's blood cried unavenged to Heaven. James had the accommodating memory of the wise statesman; but alack! an God had not granted to the human heart the trick of forgetting, who could e'er be gay?

And right merry was the company beneath the crimson dais at the Heidelberg tournament that June morning. Mistress Anne Dudley was there, her soft brown eyes a-smile, and her fair, fragile face a-blush at the whispers of stalwart Count Schomberg. The young Countess Amalia Solms stood near, a trifle awkward and Teutonic perhaps, yet like some well-bred mare of a heavy race, florid and comfortable. Then there were Princess Charlotte of the

Palatine, Prince Friedrich's sister; and the Princess Catherine. The Countess Juliane had pleaded fatigue, she who usually never owned herself weary; but already King James's injunctions to his daughter anent precedence had achieved a certain coolness between the Electress-Dowager and her new Highness Palatine. Besides, Juliane feared and disliked tourneys, as all the world knew.

So only youth and joy were present on that summer morning, save my Lord of Harrington and his lady; but the happiness which shone from Elizabeth's eyes seemed to have banished the shadow of years from her devoted friends' souls, and both my lord and my lady jested and revelled with the zest of youth.

His Highness Prince Friedrich entered the lists, eager to exhibit his skill and courage to his beloved. He wore splendid armour, wrought in finest steel and inlaid with gold by one of those patient craftsmen of Nürnberg who followed faithfully the traditions of the goodly armourer, Master Peter Vischer. Upon Friedrich's breast a scarf of azure silk and on his helmet a little ribbon of sky-blue betrayed to the envious gallants that this was Elizabeth's colour. Twenty times was his Highness victorious, for twenty brave knights were unhorsed by his mighty lance; but Prince Christian the younger of Anhalt robbed his Highness of the first prize, for twenty-three times the heralds proclaimed him victor, and twenty-three purses of gold did the Lady Elizabeth bestow on her young kinsman. The stripling's prowess had won the favour of the crowd, and when for the twenty-third time he kneeled before her Highness to receive the prize, a loud, enthusiastic shout went up. And sure he made a gallant figure as he kneeled bareheaded, slight and almost girlish, with his light straw-coloured hair ruffled from his helmet's rude touch, his face flushed, and his blue eyes ablaze. Ritter Christel they had dubbed him to distinguish him from his father, the aged Prince Christian of Anhalt. And "Long live Ritter Christel!" they cried right lustily.

"Methinks you are a very valorous knight, my lord!" her Highness laughed, as she handed him the prize for

the twenty-third time. "A valiant knight, and a most wealthy gentleman!"

"Ah! mock me not, madame," he said in a low voice, "I would fain win renown in more earnest battles, and all I won I would lay at your feet, sweet cousin. But now I have a prayer to make. Wilt grant it, cousin?"

"Ritter Christel, Ritter Christel," she answered, laughing, "dost crave another purse of gold?"

"Nay, madame, but the honour of bearing your colours for ever on my breast and on my helmet; no gold can buy such proud happiness," he said.

"My lord!" she cried, as Prince Friedrich mounted the steps from the lists, "my lord, a gallant knight craves the honour of bearing my colours for ever and a day, as they say in the fairy stories! Have I your permission to grant him this?"

"God knows, madame, we all wear your colours hidden in our hearts; so why should not my cousin here challenge the world with them on his helmet?" he answered, laying his hand affectionately on the kneeling youth's shoulder.

"Why, then, Ritter Christel," she cried, laughing, "I bestow my favour on you!" Tearing a sky-blue ribbon from her corsage, she held it out to Prince Christian. He caught her hand and laid a kiss upon it; then springing up, he bound the ribbon on his arm, saying: "Till death!"

So the long summer day passed in joustings and merry-makings, tilting at the ring, and feats of arms. In the evening after the banquet a fine pageant took place in the moonlit gardens, and, for fear false Cynthia should bestow but few white rays that night, torches and lamps had been set among the flowers to light the revels. It was a masque, written by my Lord Achatius d'Hona; and though it matched not the gay beauty of good Master Ben Jonson's masques, such as her Highness had known at Whitehall, still it was a right merry piece, and rich in eulogies of England's Pearl. There was Hercules in a lion skin, shouldering his giant club, and offering

Elizabeth the homage of the strength of the world; Mars, god of war, kneeled defeated before her; Orpheus laid a golden lute at her feet; a bearded figure of Neptune, followed by dainty mermaids and grim men of the sea, swore fealty and service to her; the nine Muses proclaimed her to be their long-sought sister, the tenth Muse, and greater than themselves; while Jason, in the person of Prince Friedrich himself, spoke some noble verses, telling how he, the new Jason, would tame not only fire-breathing bulls, as did his Greek prototype, but that he would conquer all the world for the guerdon of her smile. Prince Christian the younger of Anhalt, with sandaled feet and winged heels, appeared as Mercury, having left the service of the gods to be in future the messenger of the fairest of all goddesses, Elizabeth Stuart, he avowed.

At length the mumming ceased, and the ladies resumed their black-velvet masks, fearful of the freshening evening breeze which had sprung up and, like some over-bold lover, sought to ravish the roses of the ladies' cheeks.

In vain Scultetus, his Highness's preacher, let it be known that even this frivolous evening must close with prayer in the castle chapel. Youth and the fragrant June night conspired together to banish gravity and elude sleep, and Scultetus preached but to drowsy dowagers and weary greybeards. Youth was abroad in the castle gardens, and wotted not, for one night, of Calvinistic preachings.

Even honest Count Schomberg had wandered away, and it was no wonder that Mistress Anne Dudley was amissing. There were ladies with tall lace rebatoes round their graceful necks, and huge fardingales round their waists, with underskirts so heavily broidered that they fell like metal bells to the ankles, and displayed the long, square-toed, high-heeled shoes and the ribbon "roses" sparkling with gems. These ladies wore little velvet caps, bejewelled and beplumed, on their high-piled hair; or, an my lady was in the very newest mode, she had simplified her hairdress, to allow of her wearing the

high-crowned hat, with sweeping plume and jewelled buckle, which was copied from my lord's headgear. Beside these ladies there sauntered gallants in velvet cloaks, slashed doublets, and trunks a-puffed to so enormous a size that below them, from knee to ankle, the leg in its silken hose looked ridiculously elegant. They had stiff, upstanding pickadells around their necks, and lovelocks which just reached to these wheel-like lace and linen collars.

Thus attired, my lords and ladies wandered through the moonlit gardens—gardens as straightly gowned as themselves, with formal flower-beds, clipped bushes, and fountains where even the water seemed to have caught the mode of stiff precision which was the elegance of the age. And yet the poetry of the summer night sighed through the trim garden, the thrilling silence and mystery of night. The sweetness of the roses from her Highness's rosery, which Friedrich, prince of lovers, had caused to be planted for her even ere she came out of England, was wafted deliciously on the still air by some soft breeze, some zephyr imperceptible save to the vagrant fragrances ever seeking a carrier with whom to wander out into the world.

On to the wide terrace before the Friedrich's Bau came a tall figure, slim with youth's grace in spite of fardingale and heavy skirt, a woman masked in black velvet, and wearing from her shoulders a full black-velvet cloak. She came slowly onwards to the low parapet, and leaning there, looked down into the silent valley, where the moon had magicked the river Neckar to a silver pathway, a placid stream of light flowing through the dark lowland. The moon also sent her rays like mysterious messengers over the long, low hills beyond the valley, while on the terrace she wrought strange arabesques out of the shadows from the castle. The woman waited on some one surely, for she turned her head ever and anon as though listening for some well-loved foot-tread to break the enchanted silence.

Master Scultetus, his preaching finished, betook him-

self from the chapel towards his lodgings in the Bibliothek Bau, and the soft night air seemingly whispered some sweet message even to his harsh heart; perhaps some memory of youth disturbed the dry cobwebs of theology which networked his mind; and he, too, paused near the vaulted passage leading from the courtyard to the terrace. As if in a frame the picture lay before him: the little turret at the end of the parapet clear in the wan moonlight; beyond, the long line of the hills, dark and eerie against the deep night blue of the sky; and like a visible presence, the rich fragrance of the roses from her Highness's rosery came to greet the stern theologian. For a moment the witchery of the night held him in thrall—how beautiful it was; how beautiful! The swish of silken skirts upon the stone paving of the terrace broke in on his reverence's pondering; the sound of a hurried footfall summoned curiosity and that instinct for interference in the actions of others, which is so noble a companion to Faith in the souls of the godly, came and banished all useless admiration of Nature's beauty from Scultetus' thoughts.

"How now! lovers philandering? I must look to this," he muttered, and, proceeding a few steps onward, he ensconced himself in the deep shadow of the archway leading on to the terrace. He peered across the moonlight with his shortsighted eyes. Yes, a man in a sombre mantle stood beside a woman's figure leaning on the parapet near the little turret. Scultetus, if he had nearsighted eyes had sharp hearing, and also his soul's vision was wide with unclean suspicions and distrust of human nature. He rejoiced in the Lord at having surprised a wanton couple; he was verily uplifted at the divine leading which had brought him forth to punish such carnal triflers. Meanwhile, being a man of prudent habits, he decided to listen to the lovers' talk, and to confound them afterwards with a repetition of their lewd sayings. For a few moments the lovers were silent, leaning there side by side against the parapet; then his reverence's patience was rewarded, and he heard the man speak.

"Ah! heart of mine," he said, "what rapture to be near thee! Methinks it is flame that thy sweet lips breathe into my every vein in each kiss."

"Beloved, beloved," she murmured low.

"My queen, my soul, love of my life! can such delicious hours be given to mortal man? Thou makest me in truth a god, a god by thy passion, sweeting! Thou makest me proud for all eternity by thy kiss!"

"Ah! dear my lord, I would that Cupid could teach me a hundred ways of love to make thee blest!" she said, and even the listening Calvinist thrilled at the tenderness in the woman's voice, that voice which he seemed to know so well.

"Yet love is short, they say; but sure for us it cannot be, for in all the ages none have loved as we! Ah! no, with us it is no trance of passion. We shall always love, and glory in the delights of love!" He drew her close, and, lifting the little flouncing of black velvet which hung from her mask, he kissed her lips while she lay weak and trembling in his arms.

"Now," thought Scultetus, "now I can confront these wantons. Unhand yourselves, ye votaries of lust!" he thundered, coming forth from the shadow. "What? Beneath her new Highness Palatine's own windows you would profane the world with such vile sayings!" The lovers sprang apart, startled at the preacher's denunciation.

"Sir, you forget your place," the man cried haughtily.

"My Lord Friedrich!" stammered the discomfited divine.

"Yes, Master Scultetus," said the woman, laughing. "Our dear Lord Friedrich and—" she plucked her mask from her face, "and his faithful spouse, Elizabeth of England."

"I crave your Highness's pardon — madame, I knew not — I did not recognise — my lord, I am abashed——"

"You must have known my voice, sir, an you listened, which no doubt you did," cried Friedrich scorn-

fully. "I beg you begone, sir; I like not listeners in my house!"

"Ah, good my lord," said her Highness, coming forward. "His reverence but errs through too much zeal! In the code of stern moralists perchance, there is no room for wedded love; or rather is it not the custom for a wedded couple to play at lovers thus?"

"Madame, at Whitehall such may be the case, but—" began Scultetus with asperity.

"Sir, this is too much!" his Highness cried. "You venture, then, to disparage——"

"Sweet heart," Elizabeth broke in, "his reverence sure does not know your voice when you are speaking such soft words, he only knows the tone of argument. Now, enough; good night, Master Scultetus," and she bowed her head, dismissing the crestfallen guardian of morals, who, making profound if awkward obeisance, hurriedly withdrew.

"Nay! I am wroth, dear love!" Prince Friedrich said; "that fool preacher has broken the spell of beauty which was over us! It was sacrilege, for such rapture is a sacrament of love——"

"Be not wroth; let us not waste this delicious hour with angry thoughts. Come, dear my lord, forget the fierce preacher, and let us tarry a brief while longer here." She drew him to her, and beneath her kiss he forgot preacher and anger and the world itself.

Suddenly from below in the gardens there came the echo of a song. The lovers turned to listen.

"It is Christian singing," whispered Prince Friedrich, "Christian, whom you call Ritter Christel, toi charmeuse de tous cœurs!"

"Harken! my lord, it is an English lay he sings," she whispered back.

"Oh! eyes that pierce into the purest heart!
Oh! hands that hold the highest thoughts in thrall!
Oh! wit that weighs the depth of all desart!
Oh! sense that shows the secret sweet of all!
The heaven of heavens with heavenly power preserve thee,
Love but thyself, and give me leave to serve thee."

The young voice rose in a passionate strain, and with a depth of truth and yearning which sent an added thrill to the lovers on the terrace.

"Poor Christel! he sings his passion for thee—sings it to the stars as he may not sing it to thee," Prince Friedrich whispered.

"To the stars, yes," she answered; but she smiled to herself, for she knew that Christel sang below in the rose garden, and that she alone must have heard him singing had she been where he supposed her, in her chamber above, whose windows looked out over the terrace and the rosery.

CHAPTER III

QUIET DAYS

"Ich kniee vor Euch als getreuer Vasall,
Pfalzgräfin, schönste der Frauen!
Befehlet, so streit' ich mit Kaiser und Reich,
Befehlet, so will ich für Euch, für Euch
Die Welt in Fetzen zerhauen!"

—Joseph Victor von Scheffel.

NOW came a time of quiet at Heidelberg, a sweetness of unhurried days. The princes and nobles had returned to their various domains; only Prince Christian of Anhalt—Ritter Christel, as the whole Court now named him—only Christel lingered, and none found it in their hearts to wish him gone. He was so young and gay, and withal so gentle and thoughtful, and men said that his hopeless love for the Lady Elizabeth had taught him a wonderful goodness; that love had made of him a saint; and that whereas unrequited love usually turns a man's soul bitter, his seemed beautified and sweetened by his unselfish devotion. Even the Countess Juliane smiled at his ardent service of her new Highness Palatine; none could blame so pure a flame it seemed. There was nothing of the lovesick swain about him, no hint of puerile gallantries, only a glad devotion, an unstinted giving. And Elizabeth Stuart smiled at his love, accepting the homage of his worship unheedingly, for all her thoughts were given to Prince Friedrich. Albeit without seeking it, she needs must charm whoe'er came within the radiance of her smile and the magic of those strange, dark eyes, haunted as they seemed by the presage of some tragic destiny. There was something elusive—mysterious—about her, some hint of romance which enthralled the whole world. She had abundantly that

fateful charm which Marie Stuart had wielded to her undoing—a gift of God or of Satan to the Stuart race. This living magic had seemed dead in James I. of England, and men seeing the uncouth king, recalled dark stories of his birth and how it had been whispered that Queen Marie of Scots had borne a dead child at Edinburgh Castle on June 19th, 1566, and that a peasant's brat had been placed in the ancient oaken cradle of Scotland's kings. But Elizabeth Stuart gave the lie to these fond tales, for the hereditary charm worked mighty potent in her.

What is this haunting charm which is given to a few mortals? Beauty may be added to it, or withheld; it is not powerful intellect which makes it, nor virtue, nor kindness; it is not always the desire to please, though usually les grandes charmeuses needs must throw their spell over all, they are compelled to enchant the villein or the scullery wench; but yet, no effort of mind, no striving, can achieve charm. It is some intangible magic; and those who have had it do not alone haunt their contemporaries, but through the ages their names conjure devotion and thrill the souls of posterity. With the Stuarts there is the glamour of the lost cause which calls forth the chivalry of all generous souls; there is the tragic destiny of a doomed race which touches the fount of pitiful reverence for sorrow which dwells in that strange, inconsequent god, the human heart. Yet other races have perished, other causes have been lost, but the Stuarts are enshrined in all minds as the most charmful beings of history. And long before the doom fell, long before the cause was vanquished for ever, the magic worked, until even the name of Stuart seemed a lure for the devotion of all men!

Elizabeth Stuart was the incarnation of this compelling fascination. In Germany it was said that Heidelberg was the new Court of Love; but even the Calvinists could not smirch the purity of Elizabeth and her household; for though she banished austerity, she kept honour and noble decorum at her side; and though she loved laughter, music, poetry, and dancing, she forgot not prayer;

though she lavished money on clothes and merry-making, her hand was never empty when the poor or hungry came to her, nor her heart too glad in her own joy to withhold the good sunshine of her tenderness from those who mourned. Each day the people of Heidelberg grew to love her more, and her sayings were repeated far and near. It mattered not that her English retainers were boastful and often insolent; the people said that if her Highness knew it she would reprove them; but for the most part they withheld their complaints from her for fear of casting a shadow on her happiness. Yet, on all human happiness shadows must fall, and the brighter the horizon the more intolerable is the smallest cloud. Two clouds were on Elizabeth's sky: King James's injunctions concerning precedence, and the broils of her English attendants.

My Lady of Harrington still tarried at Heidelberg, and she counselled Elizabeth to overlook her attendants' quarrels; but Count Schomberg was much concerned and pressed for the dismissal of the turbulent Englishmen.

One summer day Elizabeth sat in one of the terrace turrets. Her embroidery frame was before her, but her hands lay a trifle listlessly on her knee, though ever and anon she caressed her pet monkey, who sat close beside her on the stone seat of the turret.

"Art weary, sweet child?" the Lady of Harrington inquired.

"Nay, not weary, but this morning Schomberg came to me with a long history of the misdoings of Sir Andrew Keith. It would seem that some of the burghers in the High Street jostled him, and he called them greasy Germans and beer louts. By an ill chance one among them had a few words English, enough to translate his taunt. They rated him back, and swords were drawn."

"Good lack! madame," said my Lord of Harrington, "'tis a scurvy trick of Schomberg to annoy you with such tattle. A street broil means nothing and is very usual."

"Indeed, my lord," cried Mistress Anne hotly, "Count Schomberg is wise in telling this tale to her Highness. I keep the wenches in good trim or we should have an English faction and a German party in her Highness's own tiring-room! And it is insufferable if Sir Andrew cannot bridle his tongue and keep his stable varlets in order."

"Ah! Anne, be not wroth! Schomberg is right, and my lord is right," said her Highness wearily. "I will speak with Sir Andrew, and let it be known in the town that he but lost that fiery member of his soul's complexity, his temper, as my royal father called it. Hans Steinberg!" she called to a little page who stood near, "summon Sir Andrew Keith to me here."

"Not now, madame," said my lord gravely, "this is not the place."

"Tut, my lord," cried Elizabeth, a flash of anger in her sombre eyes, "it shall be where I will. Go, Hans, and swiftly!" She turned to Harrington, repentant as she ever was when her quick mood had wounded any one: "Forgive me, dear friend; I am sorry to disobey you, but let me this once do my will," she said. She was like some chidden child to her life-long friend and governor.

"Madame, you are no longer a child to be ruled by me," he answered with a sigh.

"Alas! no. Those were good days at Combe, and I was mighty happy under your guidance! I shall always return to Combe—always till the day of my death," she said.

"Come, dear madame, no sad thoughts," said Lady Harrington. "In truth you will often return to Combe, and then you'll weary for Heidelberg." Her kind, quiet voice, her whole being, was so restful in its homeliness; she always seemed the embodiment of the safety of the commonplace, the comfortable security of everyday.

"In fact, as you used to say to me, dear lady," Elizabeth laughed, "there never was a little maiden who had so much, and never one like me for always craving more."

"That was when your Highness was a little maiden," said Lady Harrington peacefully, as she matched the hue of a silken skein against the brocade in her embroidery frame. "Now your Highness is a grown woman, and a wise, I trust."

"Nay, nay, a little maiden for you always," her Highness said, and, leaning over, she kissed the elder woman's healthy pink cheek. Lady Harrington stroked Elizabeth's hand.

"Your silks are in a tangle again, dear child," she said.

"I always tangle the threads," her Highness answered ruefully. "I am a little maiden still in that, you see."

"Well, well, others besides little maidens tangle threads in this world," Lady Harrington replied, with that touch of homely wisdom which is the unconscious cynicism of those dowered with the most uncommon of all the senses —common sense.

At this moment Hans Steinberg, the page, reappeared, followed by Sir Andrew Keith. Elizabeth rose and moved apart from the group in the turret. There was nothing of the little maiden in her mien now, but a dignity, a commanding manner which often came to her. Her monkey followed her, and springing upon the low parapet of the terrace, sat like some absurd old man, playing with shaky, eager little fingers with a silken skein of yellow thread which he had stolen from her Highness's embroidery frame. She patted the little creature's head, and then, turning to Sir Andrew, she said quietly: "How now, sir? Did my father send you out of England with me as my master-of-horse, or as a swaggering swashbuckler to offend my subjects in my town of Heidelberg?"

"Your Highness cannot know the facts!" cried Keith, in an excited tone. He was a tall, lanky, red-haired Scotsman, with harsh features and small, sharply glancing blue eyes. He looked a man of iron, quiet and sober, but those who knew him were aware that the quiet was a pitfall, and that he was fierce and passionate; quick to unreasoning anger, and resentful as a small-minded woman of slights which existed for the most part in his own

suspicious mind. A loyal friend and a treacherous enemy, a combination unusual in the rest of mankind, but peculiar to the Highland Scotsman. He regarded Elizabeth Stuart as his kinswoman because legend recorded that a Keith had wed a Stuart some ten generations back. He had come to England along with Robert Carr, now preening himself at Whitehall as my Lord Rochester; and Keith, being a penniless youth, had grabbed at the mastership-of-horse to her new Highness Palatine. They had tried to oust him from his post as soon as Elizabeth had arrived at Heidelberg, for he had shown himself sulky and touchy on the journey hither; but he had clung to his office, and grasped all he could of emoluments and perquisites.

He stood now before Elizabeth proudly, for such men do not cringe, and reproof always raises the fierce pride in them. There was a certain gaunt dignity about the man.

"Madame," he said, "your Highness would not have me submit to rudeness from a German lout?"

"Nay, sir, if incivility were intended; but I would have you know that such manners bring me disaffection in my townspeople. Who can speak in your defence, sir? Who saw the quarrel?"

"The Baron Falkenberg, his Highness's master-of-horse, stood near, madame; but I misdoubt me he will side with his countryman an you question him. We are strangers here—you and I, madame," he said boldly.

"Strangers," she laughed. "Sir Andrew, strangers may be better friends than kinsmen sometimes. Come, vow me there shall be no more such fighting over trifles."

"Your Highness asks me to submit to German loons?" he cried hotly.

"Tut, man, German loons are peaceful citizens. I bid you keep the peace," she said.

"You do not know the rights of it, madame," he answered stubbornly.

"Well, here comes Falkenberg; I will ask him myself, sir." She beckoned the courtier to her side, and speaking in French, as was her habit to her German subjects, for

she never mastered the German tongue thoroughly, she said: "Monsieur de Falkenberg, Sir Andrew begs you speak of what you saw yesterday in the High Street. Was my countryman subjected to insolence?"

Falkenberg hesitated; he was no friend to Keith and wished him gone, but he feared the turbulent Scotsman.

"Your Highness, I am not concerned in this matter," he said at last. "It should be dealt with by Sir Andrew's superior. Probably Count Schomberg is the proper person."

"Sir, we are not bandying words like the first or second writers in a merchant's counting-house," cried Keith. "We cannot cope with your first in authority! In England, sir, we speak as one gentleman to another, not as to who is in this or that office!"

Falkenberg puffed himself out like some offended rooster; all the instinct of the German for office, authority, and correctness seemed to swell within him. His eyes grew round, his face portentously solemn; his cheeks puffed till his mouth looked ridiculously small. He was cursed with very short arms, and his comfortably rounded person caused him to hold them always a little curved, which gave him a more than naturally pompous air.

"As master of his Highness's horse I am not in a position to pronounce on the actions of her Highness's master-of-horse," he said, and Prudence, that sour mistress who directs most Germans' actions, lived in every tone. Now it was not the man's words, but his attitude towards life which maddened Keith.

"Falkenberg!" he cried loudly, "you are a laughable loon yourself."

"Sir Andrew!" returned the other, "my honour forbids me to hear such words! I beg to challenge——"

"Oh! the devil fly away with your honour!" bawled Keith. "Cannot you speak out like a cavalier?" The disputants each fell out of the French into their own mother tongues—Keith into broad, rough Scots, and Falkenberg into Rhenish German. The quarrel grew

loud, and my Lord of Harrington came forward out of the terrace turret to still the flood of angry words.

"Gentlemen! it is unseemly to brawl before her Highness," he called.

But neither heeded him. Keith's rage was fairly let loose, and Falkenberg was blustering and asserting his own importance. It was an absurd scene, and her Highness stood by and laughed, for she could never resist laughter when it came to her. Falkenberg made a vigorous gesture with his short, thick arm; Keith thought it was a menaced blow, and, in an instant, both men had drawn their swords and were fencing furiously.

The monkey sprang from the parapet and fled to Elizabeth, hiding his strangely human face in the folds of her ample skirts. At this moment Count Schomberg appeared on the terrace.

"Hold!" he thundered. "Hold! you fools! Know you not that her Highness is enceinte, and that this may frighten her to her harm?" He caught Falkenberg by the cloak and dragged him back, while my Lord of Harrington hung on Keith's sword arm.

Elizabeth leaned against the terrace parapet, her sombre eyes were ablaze with anger, and her delicate cheeks had flushed to the colour of a wild-rose petal. Keith stood sullen and fierce in my lord's grasp; Falkenberg poured forth a torrent of German to Count Schomberg; Lady Harrington attempted to support her Highness, and Mistress Anne Dudley offered her a little crystal flagon of potent essence.

"Remove these gentlemen, Schomberg," her Highness cried, while she drew back haughtily from Lady Harrington's encircling arm, and pushed away the flagon with a trembling hand.

Half-a-dozen courtiers had arrived on the scene; they surrounded Keith and Falkenberg, and hurried them through the archway from the terrace to the courtyard.

"Come, madame, dear love, and rest," said Lady Harrington. "You feel no evil from this untoward noisi-

ness?" But Elizabeth Stuart gave no answer to the older lady's anxious queries.

"Count Schomberg!" she said, and threw back her head proudly. "Monsieur, who gave you leave to announce the state of my health to all the world? How do you know what is with me or what is not? I forbid mention of such things to me or of me!"

"But, madame, think of the profound importance to the whole Protestant cause which awaits this prince as its champion," Count Schomberg said in a heavy, pompous tone.

"Harken to me, monsieur," cried her Highness vehemently. "If you all preach to me for ever of this prince, e'en an it be a boy, I'll dress him as a maiden and teach him to sew tuckers. That is," she added hastily, "if I am enceinte, which I deny—and which is also my affair if I am!"

"Sweet madame, did I ne'er give you lessons in logic at Combe?" said Harrington, laughing.

Her Highness's swift anger was past, and she laughed too. "Logic and men's wits! Hey! but I'll match my unlogic against them and get the best of the bargain! And now, Count Schomberg, have my horses saddled. I would ride out and practise my new falcon at a sham quarry."

"Madame, I entreat!—it is not safe for you to ride thus constantly! Rest and——"

"Ah! Schomberg, Schomberg! an you say another word I'll order a tilting bout and tilt at the ring myself. For the nonce, sir, comprehend I am not enceinte!" She laughed, and catching up her monkey, who had cowered half-hidden in her skirts all the time, she hurried away to change her gown for her green velvet riding-dress. As she passed up the winding staircase of the Friedrich's Bau, they heard, through the open casements, how she sang an absurd little lullaby to the small, wizened-faced monkey, calling him her sweeting, her treasure, her dearest son, and only child.

. . . . . .

Yet it was a peaceful time in Heidelberg, in spite of ripples on the surface caused by the Englishmen and by the question of precedence. The river of life was smooth, and political cross-currents only played beyond in the sea of European action. The Hapsburg Rudolf II., scholar, bibliophile, and lover of rare curios, had left his collection in the Hradcány at Prague, had left his unwieldy empire of turbulent religious factions, and had gone to his long rest in the year 1612. Matthias, his rebellious brother, had succeeded him; and, in the intervals of warfare against the Turks and that daring adventurer, Bethlem Gabor, was laying the foundation of bitter strife by his refusal to recognise the Letter of Royal Protection wrested by the Bohemian Protestants from poor, weak, dreamy Emperor Antiquary Rudolf. England was much occupied by my Lord of Essex's coming divorce trial, and the Court was babbling of disgusting details and my Lord of Rochester's hopes; was wondering why Sir Thomas Overbury lay in the Tower, was whispering that they must hush him as he knew dark secrets, anent Prince Henry's death too; the Court and its slobbering Solomon, thus busy, played for the nonce no part in the European concert. In France that amorous king, Henry IV., had perished, and Louis XIII. was growing up under Marie de Medici's care; Sully, the noble statesman of a humorous monarch, was living retired in his quiet country refuge at Rosny, watching with grave eyes how Marie de Medici, the Regent, squandered untold wealth on her Concinis, and how politically she leaned ever more towards Spain since the affiancing of Louis XIII. to the Infanta Anna. It was the silence, the lull before the storm; and at Heidelberg it was very still.

The Lady Elizabeth went a-hunting, and danced in the evening in the stately Mirror Gallery. Lord and Lady Harrington still tarried at Heidelberg, and also Ritter Christel, who followed her Highness wherever she went. Friedrich himself took some part in the gay doings, but he continued his studies in policy and statescraft. Master Scultetus, the grim theologian, was his teacher,

and daily he exhorted his Highness to be the champion of the down-trodden Calvinists; daily he read to him letters out of Bohemia, telling of ruined pastors ousted from their parishes, of churches built by Protestant communities now closed by Imperial mandate, of oppression and misery. Sometimes he recounted strange prophesies spoken by holy visionaries, of how a king would arise—another David—to smite the unholy Goliath of Austria, that servant of the High Priest of Antichrist. Scultetus worked on the fresh soil of Friedrich's young mind, sowing the seed of enthusiasm, and watering the sprouting seedlings with a gentle rain of personal flattery. Religious enthusiasm waxed strong, and beside that fast-springing plant another flowering tree grew up—Ambition. To tend this last Scultetus called Love to his aid; he said that the Lady Elizabeth was a queen among women, why should she not be the empress of a reformed empire?

"Man, where will you out with your dreams?" cried Friedrich.

"But, sir, has there not been an emperor among your forbears? And why not again? An emperor—a champion of pure life—a helper of the oppressed—a king of the sweet and reasonable faith?" murmured Scultetus.

"God wot! master, you are dreaming!—and yet how fair a dream!" said the lover of Elizabeth Stuart.

"But the time is not yet," whispered the Calvinist. "Work, my Lord Friedrich. Work and watch and pray, that you may inherit the earth."

"Yes, master, for the glory of God!" said Friedrich, dreaming of Elizabeth as queen.

Who that knew her could help dreaming of her as of a queen among women? She was so beautiful, with her great sombre brown eyes, her auburn hair, her pale clear skin, where, on temple and breast, the blue veins showed like some delicate tracery of youth's own pencil; her full, fresh lips, where lurked the magic of her smile, whose sunshine wandered up from lip to brow and lit the deep eyes to soft lustre. She was very tall

and slight, yet with broad, majestic shoulders, which supported the grand column of her neck and the long line of her young full throat. She, who was a king's daughter, looked a queen; and Friedrich, remembering Anne of Denmark's scornful naming of her "Goody Palsgrave," sighed, and wished he had been born a king to crown her queen. What mattered it that honest Schomberg complained she had not the proper dignity of an electress? She was so young in her impetuosity, so merry, so proud, and yet so clinging to those she trusted—to the Harringtons, to Mistress Anne Dudley, to Schomberg himself. Schomberg opined that she trusted too easily. "Madame is so facile," he was for ever saying. Her own heart was full of sunshine, and it seemed that she could not suffer a shadow to fall on any one who was near her. She hated the disagreeables of life more than other women—dreaded them a little, too—and Schomberg said that madame was weak; but it was not weakness, for when she wanted anything she desired it violently, and was strong to achieve her will. Only for the smaller matters of life she was a little indifferent, and, feeling the longing of others for trifles, she must for ever be giving content by gratifying wishes. Money was a name to her. What? was that poor wretch sad because he lacked a house? That damsel weeping because she could not wed her penniless swain? "Quick! my casket where the English gold is hid—quick! Let me make these sad ones merry again." And then her drolleries, for out of sheer gaiety and quick wit she was mighty droll at times; said outrageous things which startled her hearers to laughter and alarm; yet she was never coarse, for the fire of her true merriment burned out any stain of lewdness which might otherwise have spoiled the quaint quip. Such names, too, as she had for all!—"Old Vinegar Snout," she called Scultetus; "Pig's Face" was that magnificent, overperfumed, ostentatious ambassador Hay, become my Lord of Doncaster by King James's favour, and allowed to journey right often to Heidelberg in order to see Eliza-

beth, whom he adored. "The Old Apple Woman" she named my Lady of Harrington, offering her a booth in the High Street of Heidelberg wherein "to ply the trade wherefore the Almighty had created her," so her Highness said. Friedrich himself she spoke of as her "Nigger Drakelet" because of his swarthy skin and his duck-like waddle, she averred. Schomberg was "Monsieur Sans Ducat, Maréchal de l'Ennui"; Anne Dudley "Madame la Maréchale Unwed." After a solemn wrangle anent precedence, which had set discord between Juliane, Friedrich, and Schomberg, she would walk into the banqueting-hall holding her monkey at arm's length before her, and calling out gravely: "See, madame ma mère! His splendid Highness Jack says he takes precedence of me! Of a truth, his royal father wills it!" Then, when Juliane looked wounded at her levity, down was plumped Master Jack, and down went the Lady Elizabeth on her knees before the old Electress, and it was: "Madame ma mère, what does it signify? You take precedence of my mother because you gave me Friedrich, while she only gave me myself!" And she would kiss and cosset Juliane like a little maiden at a loved mother's knee. When they rode through Heidelberg, who would have recognised the stately lady? Or when foreign guests sojourned in the castle, who would have believed this gracious, dignified Princess to be the winsome trickster that she was?

She had all the complexity of the spontaneous, all the contradictions of a grand and generous nature. She could be wayward as a silly child, wise and sensible as a grave woman, facile to weakness (as Schomberg said), and determined as a warrior; gentle and patient, and then a rough word or a cruel saying would awaken a very devil of rage in her, after the manner of her godmother-kinswoman, Elizabeth of England of splendid memory.

She was silent where she felt most deeply, a silence which pride taught her, and those who said she was heartless little knew what tenderness was in her, and what capacity for pain. They thought she was unfeeling about her brother Henry, whose death had cast a shadow on her

wedding festivities; for she spoke of him often, but always gaily as though he still lived, and none knew, save Friedrich and Mistress Anne Dudley, that she spoke thus because had she weakened the fortress of her soul by sad words, the yearning in her heart would have broken forth in tears and despair; and then she could never have spoken of him again as she loved to do. There are some women who must e'en be silent thus, for their sorrow is too deep to bear the casual pity which would wound anew and defile the sanctuary of their mourning; and these are the women whom the world always believes to be heartless.

Early in August my Lord of Harrington and his lady took leave of Elizabeth and started on their tedious journey back to England. It was bitter to Elizabeth, for she felt that in parting from these trusted friends she bid farewell for ever to childhood's thoughtless gaiety. Lord Harrington had been a father to her, a vast deal more paternal than the egoistic James; and Lady Harrington had ever been such a mother as the frivolous, foolish Queen could never have been, even had she kept her children at her side instead of giving them over from early childhood to the care of others. It was painful, too, for Elizabeth to know that the Harringtons returned to penury and debt in England; and that this poverty was caused by the expenses intendant on their stewardship for her—expenses not defrayed by the paltry sum given for her household by King James. Her Highness knew that her royal father would be generous—in promises. She saw in memory's clear vision the King's solemn, false face, she heard him sneer in the privacy of the family circle: "Ech! sirs, we hae fair stilled the auld cock's plaints, now let him gang his ain gait wi' his empty purse! He canna get bawbees frae a man wha hasna ony!" For his Majesty of England's speech relaxed into the broadest of Lowland Scots in private, and in public, too, for that matter, when his irascible temper burst forth. Elizabeth consoled herself by planning visits to England: how she would sojourn at Combe Abbey once more and wander in that delightful garden which

she, as a little maiden, had named "my territories." She would revisit her Fairy Farm, where small cows, tiny Shetland ponies, and dwarf poultry had been kept for her. Her Fairy Farm! Ah! how good those days of childhood had been! True, Mistress Tyrell, the nurse-woman, had oft reproved her Highness for the lack of dignity which prompted her to sport with peasant brats, but Elizabeth Stuart had made answer that they were so good to her—"so good and kind"—she said. And if my little Lady Phyllis Devereux, *ætat.* nine summers, had proved sullen or cross-tempered; if Master Edmund Talbot had been rough or angry; why, then, had Sally Jones, the smithy's daughter, been the better playmate, and Hal Titmouse, the cowherd's lad, the "sweeter gossip," as her Highness named it.

When Mistress Tyrell had summoned the Lady Elizabeth home for the formal supper, saying, "Come, come, madame, it is time! I pray your Grace to leave the pert varlets!" she had thrown her arms round Hal Titmouse's neck and had bid him farewell with a frank friendship she deigned not bestow on the serving-wench's upstart pretension.

"Alack! the beloved maiden reeks of the byre!" had exclaimed my Lady of Harrington when Elizabeth returned, and then the sorry tale of her Highness and the cowherd's embrace had shrilled from Mistress Tyrell's righteous lips.

"Leave the little maiden!" had cried my Lady of Harrington in her sound good sense; and to Lord Harrington she had averred: "Leave her Grace, her sweet kiss is fair and honest, and no indignity, methinks, my lord, to the stable lad nor to her Highness."

Then, too, there had been a small island in a little lake in the park, where forget-me-nots and irises, tall yellow kingcups, marsh-mallows, and fragrant meadow-sweet had succeeded one another in the task of beautifying Elizabeth's "Isle of Constant Spring," as she had called it.

Yes, as she bade farewell at Heidelberg to my Lady of Harrington she vowed she would soon revisit Combe and these dear haunts of childhood.

But a week after the Harringtons had started on their tedious journey to England the news had come to Heidelberg of how my lord had fallen ill of a malignant fever, and had died with tender words of remembrance of "my loved Lady Elizabeth" on his lips. Truly her Highness mourned him, and bitterly she reproached herself for every childish prank or petulant mood of hers which had troubled my lord in the bygone days. It was Elizabeth Stuart's first acquaintance with Death the Irrevocable.

Autumn came to Heidelberg and made glorious the beech woods with crimson and gold, with russet and purple, and touched to splendour the long, low hills. But Summer was loth to leave the world that year, and it seemed as though she masqueraded under Autumn's cloak of many colours, so that Rain and Cold, recognising her beneath the disguise, stayed in affright away, hidden with Winter.

Each day her Highness rode out, sometimes with her hooded falcon on her wrist, sometimes bent on long wanderings through the quiet woods. Christel was always in attendance and Mistress Anne Dudley, but Prince Friedrich often stayed at home, for much as he loved the gay expeditions, he was too punctilious in the performance of graver duties to neglect them even for Elizabeth's sake; and the coming year would see him not only directing Palatine affairs, but acting as the acknowledged head of the Union of Protestant Princes, whose chief his father, Friedrich IV., had also been. Friedrich took himself and his position seriously, perchance a trifle heavily, mistaking heaviness for power and real weight. Yet his mind was too lovelit for thorough absorption in matters of State. He did his best, but his best was not good enough, not strong enough. He was a Prince Charming, a delightful lover, a true gentleman, a brave youth, but the good God had not made him a statesman or a strong man. The good God so often makes a man for one career and gives him another task. Is it one of the ironies of an all-seeing Providence, or do the angels shuffle the souls and their destinies, and is God Almighty as puzzled as we are when He sees the crooked results?

Photographed by F. Bruckmann of Munich.

THEIR MAJESTIES OF BOHEMIA.

After the picture by A. P. van der Venne in the Rijks-Museum, Amsterdam.

Once when riding through the golden woods her Highness's horse shied at a figure which appeared suddenly from out a clump of hazel-trees at the outskirts of the forest. It was a tall figure dressed in vivid-coloured garments, a woman with a wildness of black hair hung with small gold coins and scarlet tassels.

"Only a wandering Egyptian, sweet cousin," said Christel, as Elizabeth, startled, drew back. "See, yonder is their camp, the blue smoke from their fire is curling over the tree-tops."

"What would she with me?" her Highness asked, as the Egyptian stood in her way. "Ask her, Christel. I cannot go forward without riding over her."

Meanwhile two of the huntsmen in their green coats and large tan-coloured felt hats, had dismounted and were endeavouring to drag the woman aside. She shook them off fiercely, and, drawing a dagger-pin from out her heavy hair, would have stabbed one of the men had his comrade not stayed her arm. The angry man raised his whip and would have brought it down on the woman's shoulders, but Christel sprang forward and bade him hold. The whole cavalcade had ridden up and formed a laughing group around her Highness, Christel, and the gipsy.

"What would you, woman?" called Elizabeth in her halting German.

"There is Destiny in your face, lady," the gipsy returned; "give me gold and I will tell your future!"

"Ah! a soothsayer! Well, would you see my hand?" cried her Highness merrily, drawing off her embroidered gauntlet.

"Nay, lady—'tis written in your face! But I reveal no secrets without my price."

"Schomberg, give her a gold piece. Tut, man!" she cried as Schomberg shook his head. "One gold piece cannot empty my treasury. See now, I want to hear my fortune read from my face!" She dismounted, aided by Christel. "Now, soothsayer, predict me happiness!" she said lightly.

The woman looked at her with an earnest gaze for a

moment. "Take back your gold, lady," she murmured, and, flinging the coin on the ground, she would have fled.

"Stay her, Christel, stay her!" cried Elizabeth, her curiosity thoroughly aroused. Prince Christian caught the gipsy's arm. "No mumming, woman," he said sternly; "you know who this lady is?"

"I only came into this countryside last night. You are from the Court, my pretty gentleman, but I know not who you are. Let me go—I dare not tell that lady what I read in her face—let me go—let me go——"

"Is it death you see?" whispered Christian, his cheek blanching.

"Not death but sorrow, great and long sorrow," she whispered.

"Christel, you squire of dames!" cried her Highness, "are you philandering even with the Egyptian? Come! I want my fortune told like any country wench at a fair!"

"Say something, woman—any foolery, and begone," Christel muttered, as he thrust the gipsy towards Elizabeth.

"Nay, if I read a fortune I must read it true, or my gift of foreknowledge would vanish for ever," she cried loudly.

"Tell me my future as you see it," said Elizabeth.

Silence fell on the laughing group; not a man of them but believed in signs, omens, and portents, and the woman's evident anxiety to be spared her task had struck a note of terror to the listeners' souls.

"Lady, you order me to tell you? Then hearken!" the Egyptian said solemnly. "In your face is beauty—fatal to men's hearts." She paused, and a sigh of relief went up from the listeners. After all, it was only the old patter they had all heard a dozen times at country Kermesses.

Some one laughed; some one said, "A dark man loves her, and two fair men yearn for her."

"Be silent!" the Egyptian cried, in a voice so fiercely commanding that the laughter was stilled. "Be silent! This is no merrymaking! Lady, the day will come when you will rue that your beauty made one man to be rash for you, and hundreds to die for you. Failure is written on your brow, and long years to mourn failure. You will

bring sorrow to those you love, despair to those who love you. I see you dying in a land beyond the sea, old, and lonely, and forgotten. There is doom in your glance, lady."

A cry went up from the throng of huntsmen: "She is an evil witch—to the river with her!" and rough hands were laid upon her.

"Leave her to me," cried Elizabeth. "Woman," she said, "why do you say such dark things to me?"

"You ordered me to tell you, lady," returned the Egyptian, and there was a proud dignity in her mien.

"Go in peace," said Elizabeth; "and mark you," she added, turning to the courtiers, "I will have no harm done her. It is a foolish mumming, but she believes what she says. Here!" she flung the woman another gold piece. "And next time we meet, prophesy me a happy future." She turned away carelessly, and remounted.

"A foolish trick; but I am thankful his Highness was not by, for he fears such things and deems them true, while I—ha! Christel, a heron! Quick! Master Falconer, off with the hood! Up, merry lady, up! See, she spies the quarry!" she cried, as the falcon flew, rising to a mere speck in the still air high above the heron, which flew with outstretched wings over the open grassland towards a distant wood.

"Christel! the heron shows fight. See! he is flying on his back. Good lack! and it is the young falcon; will she know how to avoid the bird's spear beak? She swoops! she swoops! Ah! she has him!—on! on!" Elizabeth Stuart galloped towards the spot where the antagonists of the air had fallen in a struggling mass. In her mind she had struck a childlike, fantastic bargain with Fate: If the falcon was speared by the heron's beak she would give credence to the Egyptian's warning; if the heron lay vanquished beneath the falcon's claws, then all would be well with Elizabeth Stuart, and the Egyptian had spoken a fond tale. With beating heart she galloped on, followed by hawkers and falconers.

"She has him! she has him!" she cried, as she came

to the fluttering combatants. "Thank God! she has him."

"Why so glad at the new falcon's prowess?" asked Prince Christian, as he rode up.

"Yes, Christel, I had wagered much just then," she said, laughing; "I am a foolish maiden." But Christel's eyes told her she was fairer and more beloved than any one on earth, and that her foolishness would be wisdom in his thinking for ever.

They rode home through the dusk of the November day. Behind them the sun was sinking in a red glory, but all the sky southwards was lit as with a rapture of remembrance of the passing of the Sun-god. The mighty castle loomed like some fairy palace. Silence brooded over all, and from out the township in the valley floated up on the still air the sound of those constantly recurring bells which regulated the lives of the orderly citizens. From the prayer-bell at break of dawn calling the workmen to rise and pray ere they began their tasks, to the curfew toll at nine of the night, the chimes proclaimed the order of the day. At eleven of the morning the bell rang out blithely, bidding the toilers cease their labour and refresh their bodies with food and drink; again, an hour after noon, the tinkling sound announced that the midday rest was done, and that work awaited accomplishment. At set of sun the bell summoned the children home from school or play, and told the peaceful citizens that the evening meal was prepared. Then there came the deep toll of the curfew, bidding law-abiding men to cover their lights and rest. But each town according to its trade, of course, had other bells, though the chief hours varied little all over Germany. Then there were bells to announce events: birth, and marriage, and death, fire and danger, and the storm-bell, and one which sent a shudder even to stout hearts and a prayer to the most impious lips. This was the "Armesünderglocke," the "poor sinner's bell," which was rung when a soul was sent to the eternal Tribunal by the hands of more righteous or more fortunate men. Death was the penalty for most

offences in those days, and hardly a week would pass without the dread ringing of the "poor sinner's bell."

As Elizabeth Stuart rode homewards through the crepuscule the evening chimes were ringing in the city.

"Hasten, Christel," she said, "we shall be late; already madame ma mère is assuring herself that I shall not be in time for supper. Alas! it seems to me that an we supped at midnight I should be there at one of the clock!" she laughed.

"It is time your Highness were returned," said Schomberg, riding up.

"Time, monsieur? Time and I fell out long ago. I am always pursuing the grim monster. Come, then!" she cried lightly. She urged her horse forward and galloped up the road to the first draw-gate of the castle.

"Madame, for the dear God's sake have a care!" called Schomberg. "Madame, it is slippery beneath the archway of the inner bridge!" But she paid no heed, and galloped as one pursued over the drawbridge and into the courtyard.

"Care and Time are mighty troublesome tyrants, Schomberg!" she cried, as she dismounted at the steps of the Friedrich's Bau, where she still lodged.

"Her Highness Juliane begs to wait on your Highness before supper, madame," said Sadillo, her major-domo, as she mounted the steps. Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"I have outraced Time for once, and now here is Care in the person of Madame Mère coming to hinder me from conquering Time and getting to supper!" she whispered to Mistress Anne as she hurried to her apartments on the first floor. Ere her Highness was dressed her page announced that the Countess Juliane was in the audience-chamber.

"Quick! give me my brocaded bedgown! I cannot let Madame Mère wait till I put on all these fallals," Elizabeth said, as one tiring-woman offered her the white satin underskirt, another stood ready with the stiff wheel-like fardingale of light-blue flowered taffeta, and a third held out

the short-waisted Dutch bodice of blue satin, while another busied herself with the lace rebatoe which would rise like a filmy half-frame behind the wearer's head. But, for the nonce, Elizabeth would have none of these; for to don such garments, to tie the many little ribbons down the front of the bodice, to adjust the rich overskirt and the fardingale, and fasten with jewelled ornaments on each shoulder the finish of the rebatoe—all this needed many minutes' careful attention! So, quick! her Highness's bedgown, a mantle of delicate brocade with large falling sleeves and soft laces and many bunches of ribbon. The women brought this garment, and Elizabeth Stuart was ready to receive the Electress Juliane.

"I crave forgiveness, madame ma mère," her Highness said as she entered the audience-chamber.

"Perchance my visit at this hour is irksome, madame ma fille," Juliane responded coldly, "but I have a matter of import to discuss." She paused.

"Madame, your visit is always welcome, yet I returned a little late from the chase to-day, and I feared not to be in time for supper," Elizabeth answered.

A smile passed over Juliane's lips. "A little late, ma fille—hum—hum—that were of a truth unusual! Nay, I would not chide. Ah! sweet child, let me speak as a mother. I have only your wellbeing at heart." Again she hesitated. A gulf of years lay between her and Elizabeth, that deep ravine across which the old judge the young timidly; and the young, clear-sighted and intolerant, condemn the counsels of the old. Sympathy may throw a bridge across this ravine, but it is a bridge which the heavy foot of disapproval breaks down and destroys instantly.

"I have only your wellbeing at heart, ma fille," she repeated tremulously. "Believe me, you are unwise in exerting yourself at the chase as you do—it is not safe for you, and for the dear burden you carry it is full of risk."

"But, madame, I have told you before that I feel better when I ride out," cried Elizabeth impatiently; "and if it suits my health, sure it must be good for my child."

"Nay, it is dangerous for both so near the birth. I have

spoken before; but, as your Highness paid no heed to my warnings, I wrote to his Majesty at Whitehall. To-day I have received a letter out of England." She drew a folded paper from her girdle. "Your royal father desires me to enforce our wishes."

"Madame ma mère, it is past a laughing matter!" cried Elizabeth. "I am no longer a child to be chidden thus, and to have my every action reported to his Majesty! He is no midwife, and cannot know what is best for me!"

"This is unseemly, madame," said Juliane sharply. "If you will not listen to the wise reasoning of his Majesty, you must indeed give credence to my experience. In Germany it is the custom to defer to the husband's mother in such matters."

"In Germany, madame ma mère, no doubt! But I am English, and we have other customs in our land," Elizabeth answered haughtily.

"Pretty habits, of a truth, madame! Habits of a daughter taking precedence of her spouse's mother!" cried Juliane. In a woman's dispute the grievance in discussion calls in the aid of many lurking antagonisms; argument opens the door of anger and out rush jealousy, forgotten slights, and half-a-dozen old quarrels, and in this discordant crowd the original cause of variance is lost.

"We must be served first, not only at banquets, but when there are no guests!" the old Electress continued shrilly. "We disdain all but dishes prepared by our English kitchen-master! We harken not to good Master Scultetus in his excellent discourses, we must have an English divine to read us Lutheran doctrine!" The Electress Juliane paused for breath.

"Is it of this you would speak, madame, or of my other misdoings?" quoth her Highness.

"I came to speak of your father's advice," Juliane said sadly, and passed her hand over her eyes where the tears had sprung. Elizabeth saw this, and her heart grew tender.

"Ah! Madame ma mère, you weep? Dear madame, I am a wayward being—forgive me! I care no jot for

precedence—it is only according to my father's orders. But the chase, madame—it does not harm me—I cannot sit in a shut room and mope like a German woman," she cried.

"Ma fille, you need not sit in a closed room, and German women do not mope more than others," said Juliane; "but you must consider your health at this time."

"I do consider my health, madame, in my own way; but my way is not your way," Elizabeth answered.

"No, our ways divide, your Highness, so greatly that I shall retire to my castle of Frankenthal as soon as the preparations for my reception are completed. But it is my duty to warn you of your unwisdom, and that I shall do always," the Electress-Dowager said gravely.

"I am sorry, madame, that you should leave us," her Highness replied; "yet perchance it is better so."

"The old shall make way for the young, the mother shall be banished by the wife. It is ever thus," said Juliane bitterly; "you will know the pain of it some day yourself, ma fille. It is the price of a mother's joy. But it is hard and bitter to give up our child to another woman —our child—for to a mother even the grown man is a child, always the little creature she has loved and tended." Juliane hid her face in her hands and wept.

"Ma mère, ma mère—forgive me—yes, you are right!" cried Elizabeth, flinging her arms round the old Electress. "Ma mère, listen! I will not go a-riding again; I will do all you say. Madame, we both love Friedrich. Ma mère, I love you too." The passionate generosity of her nature was aroused, and she pleaded with Juliane like a penitent child.

"Ma fille, I thank you," said the older woman, drying her eyes. "You are a brave and generous heart; God keep you so all the days of your life. Yes, I will go to Frankenthal, for the young must consort with the young; and," she smiled through the tears which welled up anew, "and the young must e'en make the mistakes of youth, must buy experience with pain."

"As you did, too, madame ma mère?" said Elizabeth, with a little laugh.

"As I did too, ma fille," replied Juliane gently.

So it fell out that Elizabeth Stuart went no more a-hunting that autumn. She occupied herself with watching the building of the new portion of Heidelberg Castle, which was to be her future abode, and with the choosing of the designs for the decorations of the private playhouse which Friedrich caused to be constructed on the spacious roof of the Dicke Thurm. Here in former ages had stood gigantic slings ready to hurl stones on an approaching enemy. Here, too, Friedrich IV. had placed heavy cannon. But in 1613 war and siege seemed to be far off eventualities to Friedrich V., and he laboured but to give entertainment to his well-beloved lady. Master Solomon De Caus, artist, architect, engineer, was summoned from France to replan the gardens, and Elizabeth Stuart passed many hours poring over drawings and designs, or wandering about the gardens with the enthusiastic Frenchman, who vowed that he would make of Heidelberg a very paradise. "Here should arise a flowering parterre!"

"Where?" cried her Highness, for De Caus pointed at space over a deep fall of ground.

"Here, your Highness, it shall arise, builded with rich earth a hundred feet up till"—he made a sweeping gesture in the air—"till here on a level with us shall lie an enchanted garden!"

There were plans for fountains, wondrous devices where the water was tortured to a dozen shapes—jetted up, flung back, whirled round; there were drawings of a hundred statues; of grottoes where mechanical instruments discoursed fair melodies, instruments set to their labours by waterworks, and others by the air of heaven. There was to be a bathing grotto: "Ici les dames seront les nymphes, Altesse, je n'en pourrais dessiner d'aussi belles!"

"When can these marvels be ready, Monsieur De Caus?" asked her Highness, and they spoke of all to do with the plan—except the cost of it. Elizabeth would have had the work to begin forthwith, but De Caus told her it could not be till after the frost and snow had been to Heidelberg and gone again. Now he could only plan, mark off men-

tally, and arrange whence should be procured the mountains of earth required for raising levels. This started them on another dream: they would fashion the rough hill-land, whence they would take this earth, into a walk for her Highness; it should become a gentle grassy slope, an orchard as she had known in England.

In the long hours after the evening meal there was no dancing now; for her Highness's condition did not allow of it, albeit the fardingale and the voluminous skirts did their duty right discreetly, and hid effectually even the contour of advanced pregnancy. This mad fashion of the fardingale came out of Spain, and had been invented, so scandal said, to hide the condition of a princess which should not have needed hiding. Be this as it may, the fardingale, a curse to ladies on other occasions, was a convenient and discreet friend during pregnancy. It suited her Highness's humour sometimes to take advantage of this, and pretend surprise at the allusions of well-wishers; and she steadily refused to receive the embassies of congratulation which came from all parts of Europe. It was no whim, she averred, but it brought mischance to congratulate before an event. This she set forth to her Highness Juliane ere she bid her farewell. The old Electress had remained steadfast in her resolution, and had journeyed to her dower-house at Frankenthal. She had departed in peace, though she had warned Friedrich and Elizabeth of the enormous expenditure they would incur if they sanctioned all De Caus' plans. There had been sharp words between mother and son, and unpleasant allusions on his part to the enormous list of items purchased at the yearly Frankfurt Fair by his father, Friedrich IV. Yet these quarrels had vanished at the farewell hour, as quarrels do, and the Countess Juliane had gone in peace.

From England came the news that the divorce of my Lady of Essex had prospered, news, too, of her betrothal to my Lord of Rochester, and of his rise in rank to the Earldom of Somerset; also mention of Sir Thomas Overbury's death in the Tower. Beyond that there was talk of King James's empty treasury, of how the Commons re-

fused to vote supplies, for though England was ruled by his Majesty, still, as a formality, the Parliament had to vote him monies—a mere formality destined to become a harsh and binding law. How little they dreamed what part the Commons would play in a few years' time! Christmas was coming in peace this year of 1613, and at Heidelberg there reigned calm and prosperity.

Shortly before Christmas it was announced that an embassy would journey from France to congratulate his Highness Palatine—and incidentally her Highness—on the prospect of an heir.

"I will not receive them!" cried Elizabeth; "I hate this talk before the child is there."

"It is only a ceremony, dear heart," explained Friedrich.

"I will not, and I will not!" said her Highness, and abode by it.

They arrived, the noble French gentlemen, bringing gifts from the Queen-mother: a chased golden goblet, pearls of price, a baby's robe of filmy laces, embroidered cushions and coverlets, a tiny cap for baby's head. Sure, dainty things to welcome the little life, things to bring a tear of tenderness to a woman's eye. Mistress Anne Dudley, gentle soul, was shown the presents, and sighed and touched the little garments with a soft hand. But her Highness, when she was told, flung off into one of her wayward moods. She would not see the ambassadors. She "would not, and she would not," as she said. Friedrich explained; he spoke of women's whims—"At such a time, my lords, I would not gainsay her Highness."

The courtiers whispered, the men ridiculed and disapproved; their ladies, jealous of the consideration shown to a woman's whim—or sensibility—grumbled that this was no German way of treating a wife, and that there must be something undutiful, probably unmoral, in a woman who could inspire such homage after marriage. "Thou dear Heaven!" they cried, "we were not wont to be used thus!" And they cast angry looks at their autocratic lords.

The ambassadors were aghast at their reception, and there was a time of strained relations at Heidelberg. Her Highness was served in her own apartments; she did not attend the banquets. Then at the eleventh hour she relented—a trifle. She would receive the ambassadors in private audience.

They were ushered up, and were met at the head of the stairs by Count Schomberg and her Highness's own gentlemen. They passed into the antehall and stood waiting before the bright log-fire on the hearth. Then the door was flung open, and her Highness's page, young Hans von Steinberg, announced that her Highness awaited the honour of welcoming France's embassy. The gentlemen passed through Mistress Anne's apartment and entered the audience chamber. Elizabeth Stuart stood before them in sweeping robes of ivory satin, huge fardingale and mighty ruff. Her breast was ablaze with jewels, a great pearl lay on her brow, a pearl which Elizabeth of England had sent to Scotland eighteen years ago to her "little gossip" when the said "little gossip" was made a member of God's church, and given the name of Elizabeth. Her Highness stood very straight, one hand resting on the back of a carven chair, the other hand playing with the glittering chain of rubies which was King James's gift to "Bess, Goody Palsgrave," as his Majesty called her. Monsieur de Sainte Catherine, the ambassador, bowed deeply; her Highness responded with a profound obeisance.

"Altesse, it is indeed a joy and honour to be received," he began.

"Mais, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur! it is no less an honour for me to welcome the envoy of her Majesty of France! It has irked me that a slight indisposition has deprived me of the pleasure of seeing you ere this."

"Madame, my royal mistress, sa Majesté très vénérée, has made bold to send you a few small gifts." He waved a secretary forward who bore an emblazoned casket. "An it please you to view them, madame?"

The pearls were shown, and she praised them; then

the golden goblet, and then the little garments of filmy laces.

"I charge you, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, to give my humble thanks to her Majesty. I am truly grateful, monsieur," she said, and offered him her hand to kiss. He bent over it.

"Madame l'Electrice, her Majesty sends you right good wishes, and greetings to the little Palsgrave, who shall be a better gift to a mother's heart than pearls and gold," he said.

"In good faith, monsieur, as all the world seems determined to think me enceinte, I shall soon believe it myself," she answered, and dismissed the astonished ambassador with one of her puzzling smiles.

. . . . .

Five days afterwards the bells of Heidelberg rang out peal after peal, and the cannon thundered salutes to the new little Prince Palatine. Elizabeth Stuart, lying in the great bed of her chamber in the Friedrich's Bau, held in her arms a little bundle of laces and ribbons, out of which peeped the tiny red face of the new-born. There was peace and rest in that sumptuous apartment; the wood fire flared and crackled on the hearth, and Mistress Anne Dudley hurried about noiselessly, bringing comfortable, warm possets for the young mother, adjusting a pillow, smoothing a rebellious curl from her Highness's brow.

Suddenly Elizabeth broke out in laughter.

"Hush, your Highness, rest!—be calm! Quick, her Highness's essence flagon! Quick! Her Highness has a nervous fit!" cried the attendants.

"Nay, but—nay, but—I am right well. I think on Monsieur de Sainte Catherine, who will have told them in France that I was not enceinte. Think, oh Anne! think of him when he hears that this little sweeting came to me so soon!"

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MESH IS SPUN

THE "little sweeting," as Elizabeth called the baby Pfalzgraf, was christened with much pomp, and received the names of Henry Friedrich—Henry in remembrance of her Highness's well-beloved brother, whose death had cast so deep a gloom on her first days of happiness as the affianced bride of Friedrich of the Palatinate. For the baptism a bevy of princes repaired to Heidelberg, and again there were magnificent festivities, joustings, and banquets. In England the news of the birth was received with acclamation, and a bill was passed by Parliament conferring the privileges of an English subject upon the little Palsgrave, and proclaiming him to be the rightful heir to the throne of England, after his mother. Prince Charles of England was a weak and ailing youth, and, even if he lived to be king, none expected him to be capable of marriage and fatherhood; thus her Highness Palatine was regarded as the future queen of Great Britain. The Puritans in especial rejoiced, and welcomed the infant Henry Friedrich as heir-presumptive to the throne. The expressions of their joy, devotion, and homage were so ostentatious that King James, always jealous and suspicious, was reported to be in a chronic condition of wrath; and though he scraped a decent sum of money from his ill-furnished treasury as a gift to the infant prince, still it was known that he at least shared but moderately in the universal satisfaction of England. It is notoriously unpleasant to monarchs to hear talk on the merits of their successors, and King James was not singular in this; the Emperor Matthias was experiencing the same discomfort at this time. While the Protestant communities rejoiced at the birth of an heir

to their champions, the Catholic world was distraught with anxiety as to who should be the future emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and the leader of the sacred cause. It was reckoned that Matthias had few years to live, and all deemed it unlikely that he would beget an heir, although he had but recently espoused Anne of Styria, daughter of the Archduke Ferdinand, regent of Tyrol, who by his first marriage had set the world agog by espousing Philippine Welser, daughter of an Augsburg patrician, no fitting mate for an Austrian Archduke, but of romantic fame for this same reason. The Emperor Matthias's brothers, Maximilian and Albrecht, though they desired to secure the imperial crown for the Catholic cause, shunned for themselves the mighty task of empire and supported the claim of Ferdinand of Styria, the Empress Anne's brother. This prince's pretensions were based on his descent from the Emperor Maximilian's brother, Philippine Welser's Duke Ferdinand of Tyrol. Now Philip III. of Spain stepped in and claimed the better right by reason of his direct descent from the Emperor Maximilian through his daughter. But the claim was repudiated immediately—firstly, according to the Salic law which forbade the female succession; and secondly, Queen Anne of Spain had, upon her marriage with Philip II., formally renounced her rights both for herself and her issue. Here the Protestant electors and even their Catholic compeers protested that the Hapsburgs possessed no hereditary imperial rights, that they were emperors by election and kings of Bohemia and Hungary by acceptance. The Bohemians and Hungarians claimed their ancient privilege of election, and contended that the wording in the patent was "accepted by the Bohemians," and that they had notoriously always possessed, and practised, the right of freely electing their kings.

To Philip of Spain's claim Matthias's brother, Archduke Maximilian, responded, that though he was willing to renounce his indisputable rights in favour of Ferdinand of Styria, whom he considered a young and strong prince, more fitted to govern an empire than such frail greybeards as himself and his brother Albrecht, still he strenuously refused

to countenance the Spaniard's pretension, based as it was on descent in the female line and even thus solemnly renounced by the female link in the chain. Philip answered that his mother had resigned her rights in favour of her brothers and the heirs of their bodies, and that she would never have given over her heritage to other claimants. Thus he averred that the renunciation was invalid, and his right was stronger than that of Ferdinand of Styria. Meanwhile the Emperor Matthias wavered and procrastinated, played with the collection of curios, carven ivories, and rare books bequeathed to him by his ill-used brother the Emperor Antiquary, Rudolf II.; dallied with his young and handsome, if portly, wife Anne; and though he seemed well disposed to the candidature of his brother-in-law, Ferdinand of Styria, he refused to settle anything definitely concerning the succession. The favourite, Bishop Klesl, tenacious of his power, and perfectly aware that it would wane when the succession question was decided and the intrigues of Europe were directed towards the newly risen sun of an acknowledged future emperor, encouraged Matthias in his inertia. This was the situation in the winter of 1613–14. Now there sprang up another party which pointed at Friedrich of the Palatinate as a possible future emperor, a Protestant monarch backed by such great powers as an English father-in-law, a Danish uncle, King Christian, and a Dutch uncle, Prince Maurice of Orange. Who could doubt that such champions of Protestantism would risk all to secure an imperial crown to their close kinsman, who would form an unassailable Protestant empire?

All these conjectures and intrigues were confounded early in 1615 by the news that the Empress Anne was enceinte, and that Matthias therefore refused to sanction further negotiations concerning the succession. He announced proudly that his heir would be king of Bohemia and Hungary, and that after his own death the empire would be governed by a regent until such time as the Hapsburg scion should be grown to man's estate and fitted to rule as emperor. Even the most sanguine of

the Catholic princes were appalled at the prospect of a regency, but Matthias enquired angrily why his dear kinsmen and adherents persisted in allotting him so short a span of life; he was in excellent health, and the happiness of knowing he would soon be a father had encouraged him to hope for long years of earthly joy.

At Heidelberg the news was received with mingled feelings: Prince Friedrich, who had attained his majority in the August of 1614, saw a future menace to Protestantism in the unborn Hapsburg infant; Scultetus likewise in Biblical phrases proclaimed the Empress's condition to be the accursed flourishing of the evil tree of the ungodly; Elizabeth Stuart, too occupied with her domestic life to care overmuch for political complications, averred that she rejoiced for the portly Empress. The Electress Juliane, sojourning for a few days at Heidelberg, was happy to hear of the circumstance, for she had feared and mistrusted the ambition which she had believed to be growing in her son's heart; she had trembled at the thought of Friedrich becoming involved in the vortex of intrigue which surrounded the throne of Bohemia and the succession to the imperial purple.

"Believe me, madame ma fille," she said to Elizabeth, "you have peace and content here in Heidelberg. Ambition is a hard and cruel task-mistress, whose unrelenting grasp crushes joy from the human heart. I have ever thought that ambition is one of the fallen angels, who has been noble zeal in Paradise, and is an evil spirit of unrest on earth, cursed by God."

"Faint heart! ma mère," returned Elizabeth, "who would not be an emperor an he had the courage?"

"Say not so, sweet child, you have content—do not grasp at other things," the old Electress said gravely.

"Ma foi, madame, if I could found an empire for my son I would e'en risk my life!" her Highness answered, laughing.

But Elizabeth was greatly occupied at home, and gave scant thought to other matters. Prince Friedrich had returned with broken health from the assembly

of Princes of the Union at Heilbronn. Elizabeth had seen him ride forth in the pride of his youth and strength, and three weeks afterwards he had returned with pallid cheeks and languid gait, and had told her that he had been sick unto death at Heilbronn. To her sharp question as to why she had been left in ignorance of his danger, he had replied that he would not have her troubled. She had been both bitterly angered at his silence and deeply touched at his loving consideration of her, but, womanlike, she had shown her anger most, and Friedrich, already depressed by the ravages of fever, had fallen into a profound melancholy.

Count Schomberg's patient wooing of Mistress Anne Dudley had been rewarded, and after a lengthy correspondence with King James the marriage had taken place at Heidelberg. The British Solomon had opposed the match stubbornly, and had worked upon Anne's father, Sutton, Lord Dudley, to withhold his consent. There was no matter too trivial for his Majesty's interference, and having taken a misliking to Schomberg he worked against the marriage as though it had been an affair of State importance. He even complained that Schomberg and Mistress Anne had been careless in their service to her Highness, and adduced as proof thereof that Elizabeth's jewels were not properly taken care of. Where, for instance, was this pearl, that emerald ring, this jewelled neckchain, that pendant of sapphires? And where was that beautiful set of ruby buttons which Queen Anne had "heedlessly bestowed" on her Highness? Poor Mistress Anne could account for all the jewels save these said ruby buttons, but his Majesty grew lachrymose, and averred that he had given them to his beloved spouse years ago in happy Scotland, and that these love tokens must be forthcoming. Then Elizabeth remembered that she had presented these buttons to a Mistress Tyrell, one of her tiring-women who had not accompanied her into Germany, and Mistress Tyrell was arraigned before King James. Yes, the buttons were safe enough, but her Highness had given them over to

the tiring-woman in payment of a debt of three hundred pounds sterling which she had lent her Highness to defray a little card account owed by the Princess of scarce seventeen summers. So the buttons were redeemed and paid for by Elizabeth; we may be sure that King James kept the strings of his purse well knotted. This fracas over and peace restored, Schomberg and Mistress Anne Dudley were happily married early in the year 1615.

De Caus had commenced his work in the Heidelberg gardens, and veritable mountains of soil were being moved from the rough hill-land behind the castle to raise the level for terraces and flowering parterres. The work went on apace, yet Elizabeth was impatient.

"Altesse!" cried De Caus, "the good God himself laboured six days to make the earth! Can I make a paradise in six months?"

"Her Highness dreams of magic palaces and wondrous plaisances which spring up in a night," said Friedrich, laughing.

"Well, my lord," retorted her Highness, "some lovers have accomplished the impossible to honour their beloved! I charge you offer me such a homage!" She laughed and turned away, walking slowly between the rose trees of her rosery with Mistress Anne Dudley. It was June, and the fragrance of the flowers was full in the air. Friedrich stood watching her Highness as she moved away. A shadow was in his eyes. "Offer me such a homage," he repeated musingly, "God knows, I would give her the world itself an I could!"

"Monseigneur," said De Caus, "let us devise some jest to please her Highness. Shall we build her a bower in a single night?" Friedrich turned to him eagerly.

"Could it be done, monsieur? But remember, sir, it must be a bower that will stand for ever. I will have no paltry thing that would crumble before the first storm," he said.

"Ah! monseigneur, shall it not be a symbol of love—beautiful, fragile?" cried the Frenchman.

"My love shall last for ever, sir; let us build the arbour of stone," returned Friedrich gravely.

"Alack! these Germans!" grumbled De Caus to himself as the Prince walked away, "heavy dullards! with their talk of 'for ever.' Bah! we say such things to women—but these barbarians mean them! Well, why not? Let us devise some solid homage in stone to be a symbol of our German prince's love." He shrugged his narrow shoulders, and taking a little book from his pocket began to draw rapidly.

A few days afterwards he came to Friedrich. "Monseigneur," he cried, "I have prepared the magic homage for her Highness!" and he presented the prince with a drawing of a carven archway. "The stone is wrought, and in a single night the gateway can be set up! But we must play a little comedy to her Highness to-morrow that she may think our magic is potent."

On the morrow Elizabeth, Mistress Anne Dudley (Countess Schomberg she was now), Amalia Solms, and little Hans Steinberg, the page, were together in her Highness's favourite turret, where, two years before, she had so often spent long hours with my lord and my lady of Harrington. Before her Highness was her embroidery frame, and Prince Christel sat near her with an open book on his knee. He was reading aloud:

"But she scorned him, and when he prayed her bestow on him a rose she had gathered, she mocked him, flung him a golden thread from her broidery, and told him to make a lute-string thereof an he could, for it was his calling to tweak a minstrel's lyre but not to woo damsels of high degree. Then did Löwfried the lover cut deeply into his breast, and laid the golden thread close to his heart, and vowed he would go out into the world and win advancement by reason of splendid deeds. And so he did, and returned to the castle proudly, having been knighted by the king's own sword. And he made a song telling of his prowess and his undying love, and this he sang to the Lady Angliona, but she answered that he must prove his faithful love to her. Then he told her that the

golden thread still lay upon his heart, but she cried out that he must show it to her. Then he said that it was deep embedded in his flesh; but she doubted him. So he drew his sword, and cutting open the old wound he drew forth the golden thread. And lo! it was shining and untarnished as on the day she had flung it to him in scorn. And the Lady Angliona was conquered by his love, and laid her hands upon his shoulders, and stooping, kissed his heart. And Löwfried the lover praised God, and gave thanks that, by the glory of true love, of ardent service, and patient suffering, so fair a guerdon had fallen to his lot as this gift of the Lady Angliona's love."

Friedrich and De Caus, warned by a gesture of her Highness's hand, had paused to listen. When the tale ended, silence fell on the hearers, for Christel's voice and the quaint wording of the ancient German legend seemed a melodious poem of the olden time. After a moment Friedrich plucked a yellow silken skein from her Highness's embroidery frame, and laughing held it out to Christel.

"See, cousin," he said, "there are still golden threads in the world even an there be no heroic knights." Christel snatched the skein from him and hid it in his doublet.

"When you reclaim it, madame, you will find it on my heart!" he cried merrily.

"Silly children," Elizabeth said, laughing. "But what would you, my lord? Methinks you and Monsieur De Caus came to me on some urgent embassy, to judge by your serious looks."

"Altesse," said De Caus, "enchanters have been at work in your garden during the night."

"How now? Enchanters—what has occurred?" she cried, and rose hastily. Prince Friedrich took her hand and led her away in mock solemnity. They passed through the courtyard and over the inner drawbridge, avoiding the wilderness of boards, plankings, mortar-heaps, and scaffolding with which the builders at work on the new wing of the castle had encumbered the ground.

Up the road beneath the beech trees his Highness led the Lady Elizabeth, then turned into the gardens near the Hungerthurm. He led her towards two towering poles which supported a damask curtain.

"What pleasantry is this, my lord? A masque—a new play-acting?" cried her Highness.

He gave her a gilded cord. "Draw aside the curtain, madame ma mie," he whispered, "and you shall see a magicking!"

Elizabeth impetuously wrenched at the cord; the curtain flew apart and revealed a beautiful archway of carven stone.

"Magic indeed!" she cried; "only yestere'en I passed this way and there was no building begun here!"

"Madame ma femme," said Friedrich, "you bid me offer you a homage, so I builded this in a single night. Jason buried the dragon's teeth in the earth, and an army sprang to his bidding! I sow my commands in the soil, and a fair structure of stone straightway arises to symbolise the enduring love of my heart for you."

"I thank you, beloved," said Elizabeth, and tears stood in her eyes, "I thank you for this homage, which will tell of your love for me long after we have passed from men's thoughts."

Strange that her Highness spoke thus, for this gateway is the only building of all those Friedrich raised which has defied warfare and time, and stands unharmed amid the ruins of Heidelberg; and we may still read the half erased inscription:—

"FREDERICUS V. ELIZABETHAE CONJUGI CARISS.
A.D. M.D.C.XV. F.C."

Thus the days passed in peace. In August came the news that the Empress Anne had been disappointed in her hopes; nay, that these hopes had been delusion. Many people laughed, some rejoiced, and notably the Archduke Maximilian, who had expressed his anxiety at the prospect of a regency in such violent terms that even the amiable Emperor Matthias had been offended, now

rejoiced so openly at the Empress's disappointment that the Emperor's anger was thoroughly aroused. And the poor, stout Empress Anne? Who gave a thought to the barren woman's sadness? Of a truth, it is a ruthless game this of intrigue and kingcraft!

The long summer days closed in, and once more autumn came to Heidelberg. The Lady Elizabeth and Mistress Anne spoke of things dear to woman's heart, and the embroidery frames were laid aside for delicate fabrics and filmy laces. It was: "Sweet Anne, what will you name the little one? Ah! how good 'twill be to see you with a tiny sweeting of your own. If 'tis a maiden she must be the little love of my boy's heart, and if God gives you a man-child he will be my naughty romp's trusty friend." And thus they talked and dreamed while they sewed little garments for the newcomer's adorning.

Then came an autumn day when all was anxiety and yet hope. For long hours the mother agonised—in vain. Alas! the feeble cry of greeting to the world was never heard, and sweet Mistress Anne lay with empty arms and yearning heart. Elizabeth Stuart left her neither night nor day, and gave the comfort of her loving care to the forlorn one. "Courage, Anne! courage! You will bear other children, you will tell other little ones of their brother whom God loved too well to leave to us," she said. But Mistress Anne shook her head; and one morning as the sun rose in harsh splendour over the frost-glittering gardens, her gentle soul followed her dead child into the eternal silence.

Deep sadness lay on Elizabeth Stuart, and she fell sick from grief. As if in mercy God sent the stern-browed angel Anxiety to fight the demon of despair in Schomberg's heart. He had been drawn very close to her Highness in those hours near Mistress Anne's bedside, and while Elizabeth lay stricken to sickness by grief, it assuaged his sorrow to watch over all and keep order in the household for her Highness's sake. Yet he was so bowed with sorrow, so broken, that men wondered and women loved him reverently for the tribute of agony which he paid to her he loved.

Elizabeth rose from her bed of sickness white and wan, and Friedrich wrote urgently to England to pray my lady of Harrington to come at once. She arrived at Heidelberg shortly before Christmas, and her comfortable good sense seemed the only medicine which could heal Elizabeth's pain.

"See, dear child," said my lady, "I would not have you forget to mourn. Were you not sad I could not love you; but there is no beauty in unending woe. It is one of the absurdities which men have fashioned, this, that the strong soul when stricken must wail for ever. See here, it is with the heart as with the body—the wounded flesh heals in time—never the same again, for there must be a scar where a deep wound has been; but we do not say: 'How beautiful a body it is which festers and will not heal!' Rather we say: 'Alack! unclean blood.' And with the soul it is even so; the strong and healthy mind heals and is not conquered by pain. 'Never the same again,' you say, madame? Nay, but we are never the same one hour to the next, for have we not lived through that hour and endured the carving hand of time?"

Often she spoke thus to Elizabeth, and she forgot not to let her weep out her grief.

Yet perchance Amalia Solms unwittingly helped her Highness even more than my lady of Harrington, for she applied the stinging acid of the pity of a narrow nature. She spoke of Mistress Anne as "cette pauvre morte," and she seemed to Elizabeth to belittle her memory by allusions to her as a poor dead thing. Then, too, her assumption that she could take Anne's place in Elizabeth's life stung her Highness to anger, and wrath is sometimes a good fresh breeze over a brooding soul.

"La lourde will drive me to a frenzy, dear Harrington," she exclaimed one day when the Solms had taken upon herself to command one of the tiring-women to put straight her Highness's jewels. "She thinks to play my Anne's part, alack!"

"She is a good soul, madame," said my lady placidly.

"Good—good! I am weary of her goodness! She is good because there is nothing bad in her, that is her only

merit," Elizabeth said sharply, and then a smile crept over her lips and she laughed at her own ill-humour. Thus through the gate which annoyance had cleft in the darkness of her soul her sense of humour broke through, and my lady of Harrington knew that her Highness's sadness was lighter.

The current of life at Heidelberg flowed on peacefully once more. Prince Friedrich was often called away by political affairs, and when he sojourned at Heidelberg there was much talk of State matters, and members of both the contending parties often tarried at the castle to discuss grave questions. Friedrich played his part with ardour, and if he won the hearts of the Protestant princes, he also endeavoured to propitiate the Catholics by his moderate tone in religious matters. But he did so against the will of Scultetus, whose relentless bigotry knew no half measures. Another sombre influence was Duke Christian of Anhalt, Ritter Christel's father. Duke Christian was a strong, harsh old man of giant stature, beneath whose shaggy overhanging brows the pale blue eyes glared fiercely. It was said that his religion was that of a fanatic, but those who knew him nearer whispered that faith and integrity were burnt out of his heart by an almost insane passion of hatred of the House of Hapsburg.

Such were the two advisers who moulded the maniable clay of Friedrich's weak nature, and if at first he acted with moderation, and won golden opinions from friends and antagonists, the poison seed of intolerance but grew the stronger in his being. A visit to Munich which, as her Highness was with child, he undertook alone, did not mend matters. His cousin, Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, spoke with him gravely and warned him to avoid those persons who urged ambition upon him. "To keep what he has got should be the statesman's first care, mon cousin," the wily Bavarian told him. "Remember the story of the dog who, having a bone in his mouth, opened his teeth to snatch a joint of mutton, and so lost his bone and missed the meat as well."

"But you forget that in these days it is no question of

personal ambition, your Highness," cried Friedrich hotly, "there is religion to be guarded and helped; though our faith is not the same, you can understand that."

"Beware of ambition dressed in a preacher's gown, Palsgrave," replied Maximilian, with the astute eyes and the grave, false smile. Then Friedrich, young and ardent, disclosed his own honest plan. He saw the peace and plenty in Bavaria, the lenient rule, the excellent order, and he proposed that Maximilian should become king of Bohemia at Matthias' death. Obviously the Catholic princes would consent, and Friedrich promised the support of the Princes of the Protestant Union, upon the sole condition of religious freedom to all Protestants, both Calvinist and Lutheran, in Bohemia. But Maximilian would hear nothing of it; he spoke of his faithful love of the House of Hapsburg, and of his admiration for Ferdinand of Styria, the acknowledged candidate for Bohemia and the empire. He smiled to himself grimly; why should he jeopardise his Bavaria for a tottering throne in an unruly country like Bohemia? No, he would like to be the first Elector and to annex several portions of the Rhenish Palatinate, but this he did not mention.

His Highness Friedrich's visit was not soothing to his vanity, for he felt that Maximilian treated him like some eager, imprudent boy, and, offended in his young pride, his mind veered the more to Duke Christian of Anhalt and Scultetus, who fostered in him the idea of his importance as leader of the Union, and the representative of German Protestantism. It were too much to say that Friedrich left Munich in pique, but he was strong in his desire to hasten back to Heidelberg, and love lent him wings, for he longed to be with the Lady Elizabeth, and dreaded lest she should be confined in his absence. And he rode home so wildly through the snow drifts that he reached Heidelberg in a day and a night, and his Lord Chamberlain, Count Solms, with the rest of the suite, arrived long after the impetuous prince.

"His Highness the Palsgrave is too ardent a lover to be a statesman," said Duke Maximilian of Bavaria grimly, when he heard of his kinsman's exploit.

CHAPTER V

WARNING

IN December 1617 Elizabeth's second son Charles Louis was born, and all Heidelberg was astounded to see Imperial ambassadors arrive from Prague to honour the champions of Protestantism, and congratulate their Highnesses upon the infant's birth. King James of England, hearing of this, was mighty proud, and averred that the Catholic world, knowing its own weakness, was wooing the favour of the powerful Protestant ruler, Friedrich of the Palatinate. Now her Highness Elizabeth, weary of the peaceful monotony of Heidelberg, was all too ready to respond to the overtures of the Imperial Court, and sent warm and friendly messages to her Majesty the Empress. The portly lady proclaimed herself highly gratified, and roused herself sufficiently from her lethargic ease to pen a letter to Elizabeth. She wrote that she greatly desired the honour of greeting her Highness; it would be a joy to her to welcome Madame l'Électrice at Prague.

"Let us make a pilgrimage thither, my lord," cried her Highness gaily; "alack! how slow you are, sweet sir, to grasp the merriment of life! I weary for a journey. Come, let us to Prague; I vow 'twill be hugely diverting!" But Friedrich would not consent; he urged the perils of travel through so disquiet a country as Bohemia; and he feared some disturbances among the Protestants, who might seize the occasion of his visit to the Emperor to rise in revolt.

"Oh! beloved, these constant restrictions make me rage!" she retorted. "First I would go into England, then it is precedence which balks me. You cannot let my brother sit higher than you at the banquets, and my brother cannot give his place to you! Then we write

documents and my father indites whole tomes—and we pay half a hundred ambassadors to settle the matter—but the end is: her Highness does not go into England in this year of grace!" Elizabeth mimicked the portentous mouthing of King James.

"But, mon cher et unique cœur," cried Friedrich, "what would you? Now that you are restored to health there shall be huntings and dancings here. The Frankfurt fair in spring will provide you with many rich garments, and you will be diverted and occupied in their choosing. Are you so weary of me, sweet Bess?"

"Alack! dear heart, why should I be weary of you because I crave a journey? You have your State matters to amuse you, why should I not have some interest in worldly things too?" she asked.

"It is a woman's lot, madame——" he began.

"Tut! a woman's lot! I warrant other women yearn for merriment and change as I do!" she cried. "There, sir, I see you are taking the husband's tone with me! I liked the lover's accents better."

"I am your lover, dearling, always—but I cannot take you to Prague," he answered.

"You are like the farmer in the old story, monseigneur!" she retorted. "He said he would like to drive his good wife to the fair, but unfortunately he and his horse were going the other way, so they went to a beer tavern instead."

But her Highness got her way in the end, and it was decided that the visit to Prague should take place in the spring. There were many preparations afoot in her Highness's tiring-room; white and coloured linen ruffs, lace rebatoes of half-a-dozen different shapes and sizes, new-fashioned fardingales, gorgeous brocaded overskirts, bodices long in the French mode, bodices short with the loose Dutch waist, shoe roses, embroidered gloves, riding gauntlets, and velvet gowns for the hunt, tall felt hats with drooping feathers, small velvet caps with upstanding plumes, fans and ribbons and rosettes, fabrics of all kinds, silks, taffetas, satins and velvets were strewn in her

Highness's tiring-room. Anxious merchants journeyed from Frankfurt, where the word had been given that her Highness Palatine's wardrobe was to be replenished.

Then one day in early spring, when Elizabeth returned from riding, she found the Prince awaiting her at the door of the Friedrich's Bau with grave and anxious mien and with a mud-bespattered gentleman standing beside him.

"Captain Bell craves the honour of being presented to your Highness," Prince Friedrich said, "he rides on urgent business. He will tell you all when you receive him."

"I am ready to speak with you, sir, if you will follow me upstairs to my audience chamber," Elizabeth said graciously. They passed up the winding stairway, through the marbled corridor, and into the tapestry-hung audience hall.

"Now, sir!" cried her Highness impetuously, "what is this business which hath brought a cloud of anxiety to my husband's brow?"

"Madame, it is indeed a grave matter I have to relate. Your Highness intends to visit Prague next month, and——"

"Most certainly, sir, I travel to Prague in May—it is decided," she said coldly, and shot a glance of angry suspicion at Prince Friedrich, whose reluctancy she still resented.

"Your Highness goes at the risk of her life then," said Bell, "there is a plot, madame, of which I have proof."

"I go as the guest of her Majesty the Empress and under her protection. I shall be safe," returned Elizabeth haughtily.

"Madame, I implore you to listen to me. The Empress, of course, knows nothing of this hideous plot——"

"Captain Bell, we are living in the year of grace sixteen hundred and seventeen, we are no longer in the dark ages when murder was an ordinary matter. These are fond tales, sir, I will not hearken," she said. Bell drew a bundle of papers from his tunic.

"Read, madame," he answered. She took the papers and spread them on a table.

"Some are in cypher, sir, I cannot read them. Ah!

here is one in German and another in Italian. 'Touching the sleeping potion for an illustrious lady, I have a delicious medicine which gives long sleep,'" she read aloud, "'sweet to the taste but very faint, not noticeable if mixed with wine, recommended to be used with good potent Malvoisie.' Tut, sir, this is some apothecary's formula, some doctor suing for patronage and setting forth the excellence of a soothing draught," she said impatiently.

"If your Highness will read the signature the sinister import is but too clear," the Englishman said. She turned the document around.

"Theophania—Theophania? I know not the name," she said in a musing tone.

"Yet it is a name known throughout Europe, madame. Theophania is the drug-wife of Naples, and her name has been mentioned in every poison trial of the last ten years," he answered. "She ranks higher in her horrible craft than Mrs. Turner of London," he added. Elizabeth started.

"She has paid for her crimes, sir; I will not hear mention of her," she said quickly.

"Madame, I crave forgiveness for my plain speaking. Theophania has boasted that, an she had had the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury, none could have traced her drugs. Her victims die swiftly, and by a gentle ceasing of the life's pulses; there is no struggle, no pain, and no trace in or on the body." He spoke quietly.

"How got you this knowledge, sir? How came you by these papers?" she asked.

"Your Highness, I am a soldier of fortune. Till recently I served with the imperial troops against the Turks. Lately I have been in Vienna, lodged in the house of a priest. One night when he thought me at a tavern, I had come home early. My bedchamber was near his parlour, I heard voices, and as I lay a-bed I heard the mention of your name. I listened, and I heard that as you are a danger to the Catholics, you are to be put away secretly. I heard the stranger's voice say that he

was the agent of the Archduke Maximilian. All know how that prince inclines to the use of poison; did he not propose to Ferdinand of Styria to remove Bishop Klesl, when the favourite stood in their way in the succession question? Your Highness will remember that the plan leaked out, and made much talk three years ago? Well, madame, there was mention of poison both for your Highness and for your son; the Elector Palatine would seem to commit suicide from grief—but that plan was only slightly worked out; I heard no more, for they spoke low. The next morning my friend the priest was busied in the copying of various documents. I proposed to him to drink a cup of sack with me. He said he had no time to go abroad, and went on writing. I hurried to the tavern, bought two bottles of sack; then I went to a friendly apothecary, told him that I was near mad with sleeplessness, and he gave me a drug the half of which he vowed would throw me into a slumber for long hours. I put the whole contents of the phial into one of the bottles of sack and went home. The priest was still writing. I told him I would give him a feast, and pressed him to go to the tavern with me; then when he refused, as I had judged he would, I pretended to remember I had two flasks of sack packed away. I fetched them. We began to drink the undrugged wine. By a seeming false movement, I upset both his glass and the flask. We made merry, and I opened the drugged flask and poured it into his glass; he drank, while I sipped my wine, which had come from the other bottle. Finally, madame, the priest fell into a heavy slumber, and I was at liberty to examine the papers on his table. I copied them, one and all, and these are they." He pointed at the documents which her Highness held in her hand. "Two days I tarried in Vienna, leading the usual lazy life of the unemployed soldier, then I gave out I must ride to Prague to seek better work. I took a hearty farewell of the priest, who suspected nothing, rode off towards Prague, then turned westward, and I am here at your Highness's service."

"I thank you, sir," she answered, "but I must ask you why you have thus risked yourself to save me?"

"Madame, I have told you I am a soldier of fortune." He shrugged his shoulders. "I was out of work and getting no pay from the Emperor. One service is as good as another to me, and it would have been an ugly thought to me that a woman had been poisoned and that I could have warned her and had not done so."

"Your frankness pleases me, sir," Elizabeth said with a smile, "but I cannot credit your story for all that."

"Your Highness, I am a rough man who earns his bread by warfare. When I came hither I had undertaken to warn you in the hope of payment for my trouble. I will take no pay from you now, as you will not credit my good faith. I have warned you, and I crave permission to go on my way." He bowed awkwardly, and turned towards the door. Prince Friedrich, who had stood silent during this colloquy, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Stay, sir," he said, "I will drive a bargain with her Highness. Madame, will you at least trust Captain Bell to carry these papers into England? Let him tell his tale to his Majesty, and bring us his advice in answer."

"Why this, dear my lord?" she cried impatiently. "I journey to Prague in a few weeks' time; when this gentleman returns out of England he will find me visiting her Majesty the Empress."

"Then, sir, I commission you to ride in all haste into England. Pray God you will return here in time to hinder our journey to Prague if his Majesty's wisdom deems it safer for us to stay at home," said Friedrich. "Madame, will you consent to this, and give me your promise to obey King James if he counsels abandonment of the visit?"

'Why should my father know more of this than we?" she asked.

"Will you give me your promise, madame?" Friedrich repeated anxiously.

"Yes, an my father can adduce good reasons for not

going to Prague, I will obey Then hasten, Captain Bell, you have three weeks to ride to England and back; longer I will not tarry," she said, laughing.

"Why this mad plan, beloved?" she said when Bell had left; "why should my father be gifted with such penetration as to be especially able to judge of the truth of this absurd tale?"

"Bell is an Englishman, dear heart. If his story is a mere pretext for gaining gold, he will not ride to England, and we shall never hear more of him," said Friedrich.

"Yes, that is wise; meanwhile, dear love, you err an you think I shall cease my preparations for our journey," she said gaily.

The days passed quickly, and her Highness's wardrobe waxed, also Elizabeth's impatience to start on her journey to Prague. If she gave Bell and his grim warning a thought, it was as to some past slight annoyance. She did not expect to see the adventurer return to Heidelberg. He had been given a purse of gold and a remount for his trouble, as Prince Friedrich had believed the man to have been in earnest. "Although he might be a dupe, he was no rascal," his Highness had remarked.

The visit was fixed for the middle of May, but towards the end of April a letter from her Majesty the Empress was brought to Heidelberg. It informed their Highnesses Palatine that the Emperor purposed summoning the Diet of the Empire to Ratisbon towards the 20th of May, and therefore her Majesty must renounce the honour of receiving their Highnesses in Prague for the nonce, but she prayed Elizabeth and her eldest son to accompany the Elector to Ratisbon. The Empress added that the journey thither from Heidelberg would prove less arduous than the long road to Prague, and that the unsettled state of Bohemia rendered travelling both unsafe and unpleasant.

"And this friendly, anxious lady is the cruel monster who would poison me an she could!" cried Elizabeth as she handed the missive to his Highness. "It is now a full month since Captain Bell rode to England. Methinks

we shall ne'er set eyes on him again. So I shall see Ratisbon and the Imperial Court at last!"

As the appointed time for their Highnesses' departure drew near, Elizabeth was in a fever of excitement; she loved change, and it was given to her to enjoy peace and content, but withal to endure a certain monotony at Heidelberg. The departure was fixed for a Tuesday, and on the preceding Monday her Highness had ordered a grand ball to be held in the Hall of Mirrors. From the neighbouring castles the lords and ladies were bidden to the feast, and on the morning the town of Heidelberg was filled with constantly arriving companies of horsemen, and sometimes a heavy, swaying, springless vehicle, gilded and carven, awakened the curiosity of the townsfolk, for such carriages were rare enough in those days and only the nobles owned them. In fact the purchase of a carosse was deemed a weighty matter, especially as, for the most part, these lumbering monsters were built in far-off Ghent by the famous master-builders of Flanders. When a carosse was delivered to the purchaser the master-builder travelled all the way with his masterpiece, and gave it over with much formality. There were a-many carriages, fully a hundred and fifty, in the rich and peaceful Palatinate, not counting, of course, her Highness Palatine's own carosses.

The ladies who travelled in these coaches were shaken and jolted cruelly, and even the shortest journey was an adventurous undertaking, for the roads were so rough that it constantly happened that a wheel would stick in the heavy mud or become wedged in some deep rut, and then my lady and her family would be obliged to descend and stand waiting by the roadside while my lord and his attendants laboured to set up the toppling, ungainly, carven and gilded vehicle; yet it was so grand a thing to own a coach, it was so splendid to arrive at a town in such opulence, that my lady preferred any discomfort, and professed herself astounded at her mother's and grandmother's misfortune in having been obliged to travel a-horseback or strapped into a pillion behind some stout serving-man.

"The Goldene Hirsch," the beautiful renaissance hostelry, was full of guests, for it was not every noble family which possessed a palace in Heidelberg, though there were many tall gabled houses in the narrow streets which were known by high-sounding names, such as: the Hirschorn Palace, the House Ingelheim, Ritter von Diebsberg's Mansion, and the rest. It was a gay scene, and as a sign of the changed times the old men noticed that there were no broils ending in bloodshed, and that though the serving-men jostled and quarrelled, their lords were affable and friendly to each other. Yes, it was a time of peace and prosperity; war and feud had vanished for ever, it seemed, from the quiet Rhineland. "Pray God we may never see the old dark days return," they said. Yet they looked back to the vanished turbulent times with regret, these old men; "it was a merry life withal," they said. But, in truth, it was for their own youth that they yearned, youth which made life so splendidly poignant both in joy and pain, youth shining in the mirror of remembrance, and time had blurred the mirror so that all they saw were the good old days—however bad they were—the good old days when they were young.

Towards four of the clock a number of guests made their way up the narrow stone-paved road to the castle. Several coaches lumbered slowly up, the horses straining at the traces and almost slipping backwards on the steep incline.

First there was a banquet in the newly finished hall of the Englische Bau, a vast room hung with tapestries depicting hunting scenes, and lit by hundreds of candles whose light fell discreetly on the silks and satins of the women's gowns, and lit the splendour of their flashing jewels. Her Highness Elizabeth was right merry and gracious, and her white satin gown of the newest mode was the object of much attention on the part of the lady guests. Prince Friedrich, too, was richly attired in ivory-coloured satin, with hugely puffed breeches and silken hose, long flat-toed shoes with jewelled roses, a doublet slashed with silver, and a stiff square ruff of fine linen edged with

lace. Prince Christel was splendid in an azure doublet, and even his father, fierce old Anhalt, had donned a garment of purple velvet slashed and puffed in the latest design, although he had strenuously refused to alter his short cut of hair to suit the present mode of falling lovelocks. "I have kept my head trimmed all my days, and to affect a jackanapes mode, sir, and go with my hair falling on to my ruff—no, sir, by my redemption! no, sir!" he had bawled at the simpering barber.

The banquet lasted long, for in 1617 a feast meant solid eating and drinking. The dishes were over a hundred and sixty in number, not counting the sweetmeats; for it had been considered shame to a kitchen-master had he omitted the serving of any beast, bird, or fish to be procured in the countryside. There were wild boars' heads, pigs roasted whole, barons of beef, entire sheep, whole deer, hares and wild birds, capons and geese, swans and peacocks, eels, and perch, and salmon, and trout, and two different sorts of soups, and pasties and tarts, and sweetmeats for the womenkind. Each guest had a spoon and knife, and a goblet for his own use; and so wonderful was the luxury and refinement at Heidelberg that several times during the banquet the guests were given clean platters of silver and even of gold. Often, too, pages presented the revellers with bowls filled with lavender-scented water wherein to wash, and delicate linen napkins wherewith to dry their hands.

At eight of the clock the guests assembled in the Hall of Mirrors, and the musicians struck up a gay yet stately measure. Old Anhalt led out the Electress Juliane, Prince Friedrich danced with the Lady of Hirschhorn, while her Highness Elizabeth gave her hand to Prince Christel. In stiff and stately grace the old Electress paced across the marble floor in the sliding, swaying steps of the ancient pavyn, and Prince Friedrich followed with the dignified portly Lady of Hirschhorn.

"Do you know, sweet cousin, the words which go with this pavyn tune?" whispered Christel as they stood at the upper end of the hall, while the other couples accomplished their solemn dance.

"Are there words to it, Christel?" she answered; "say them to me as we dance." She gave him her hand, and commenced the slow, gliding motion. He lifted her hand high, and bending towards her he murmured as they swept forward through the long room:

"Belle qui tiens ma vie
Captive sous tes yeulx,
Qui m'as l'âme ravie
D'un sourire gracieux,
Viens tôt me secourir
Ou me fauldra mourir."

The verse was indeed that of the ancient pavyn melody; it fell from his lips in rhythm to the stately measure, and as he whispered the last words the dance ended, and he bowed low, while Elizabeth Stuart bent in a deep obeisance.

"Do not die yet, cousin," she said, laughing; "you shall woo me to dance at Ratisbon, and we will tread a pavyn once more together." She turned towards the Electress-mother. "I shall not dance a galliard so early in the night's pleasure, ma mère. We will watch the merry ones a-hopping it." The music rang out in a tripping, hurried measure, and in an instant the hall was full of energetic dancers. Her Highness sat beside Juliane.

"A galliard is an absurd thing," she said gaily. "Look! ma mère—one, two, three, four, hop and spring! It is mighty diverting to dance it, but a monstrous silly sight!"

"Ah! ma fille, when I first came here from Holland they danced the volte at court! Have you never seen one? Well, the peasants dance it still, and I warrant an we asked the Lady of Hirschhorn she would be ready to show it us," answered Juliane.

"We will ask her; we must ask her!" cried the impetuous one. "Dear lady, will you tread a volte for me to see?" she called to the lady, who stood near.

"Tread a volte?" the worthy Hirschhorn answered, with a good-humoured laugh. "Your Highness, there is mighty

little treading in a volte, and I am too old by twenty summers for such a jigging."

But Elizabeth Stuart, like a child in the vehemence of her wishes, importuned the Lady of Hirschhorn: it was, "Oh, madame, pray dance me a volte!" and "Sweet madame, you are as young as a fine midsummer day. Do pace me the volte!" till at length the worthy matron confessed that her niece Margarete Handschusheim knew the old jig, and that the junker of Hirschhorn had often danced it at the village kermess. Then her Highness called for the tune. Here was another difficulty; the musicians knew it well, but they declared that the old dudelsack, the shrill, wind-blown peasant pipes, was needed to play it aright. Off to the menials' quarters sped pages and cavaliers, and soon the piper was brought to the Hall of Mirrors.

Hans Hirschhorn and Margarete joined their left hands; with his right hand he grasped her firmly at the back, while with her right hand she held down her skirts in front. They gave a little hop to the left, two long steps to the right—and then it was evident why the Junker grasped his partner at the back, and why she held down her skirts in front, for there followed three mighty springs in the air, and the lady was flung up and forward till her skirts swirled dangerously high! Ever faster squeaked the pipes, ever quicker hopped and jumped the dancers. No graceful, courtly dance indeed, but hilarious and rough. And Elizabeth Stuart laughed until her eyes were dim with merriment's tears. As if the spirit of gaiety had banished ceremony from the Hall of Mirrors, laughter took the place of grave decorum, and dance after dance of olden days succeeded one another that evening. There were the galliard and the branle, the courante and the bassedance, and her Highness Elizabeth tripped and jigged with all the zest of her healthful youth. How she laughed, too, when they told her the words of the galliard tunes: "J'aimerais mieux dormir seulette," "Baisons nous Belle, la lune ne voit pas," and the rest of the fond old rhymes.

Some one proposed to dance a roundel, and there was no lack of choice of these rollicking, old-fashioned dances. There was "La Lavandière," a playful ring with hand-clapping, mimic chasing of partners, and as termination a circle formed by the dancers singing a spirited chorus. Then came the "Branle à la Haye," whose delicious finale gave each cavalier the right to kiss his lady on the cheek.

"Cousin, cousin!" laughed his Highness to Prince Christel, "I would have dared to stake mine honour that you would dance the 'Branle des Baisers' with my Lady Elizabeth."

"And I would have risked my soul for so sweet a dance!" Christel answered. Her Highness, who stood near, laughed lightly.

"I challenge you, cousin Christel, to dance a branle with me at Ratisbon at the solemn feast. And you, my lord," she cried, turning to Prince Friedrich, "you, dear my lord, shall hop a volte with her portly Majesty of Austria!"

As she spoke it seemed to her that a chill breath of pending evil touched her, and the laughter froze on her lips. She turned away from Prince Friedrich and Christel, and seating herself she passed her white fingers wearily across her brow.

At the doorway there was a sudden confusion among the laughing crowd, and a tall gaunt figure in a shabby doublet burst through the finely arrayed throng of revellers. A man with blanched and haggard face, with wild eyes and ill-trimmed beard, shouldered his way roughly past the astonished dancers. As he passed up the long hall towards Elizabeth Stuart a hush fell on the assembly. He seemed to be the incarnation of the sinister, and the mirrors on the walls reflected the gaunt figure and made the one man's advent appear like the advance of a hundred grim intruders. It was as though the thousand candles in the crystal chandeliers shed a fainter radiance, as though this one figure of gloom had in very fact cast a shadow on the gay scene.

The man fell on his knees before her Highness. "Thank God! I am returned in time, madame!" he said hoarsely.

"Captain Bell!" she cried, springing up. "Sir, what message of ill-fortune do you bring?"

"Madame—go not to Prague!" he cried wildly.

"To Prague? Nay—I journey to-morrow to the Imperial Court at Ratisbon," she answered.

"Go not—go not—I have proof—poison." He choked, and clutched at the neckband of his stiff pickadell. "Poison——" he muttered, and with a groan fell forward senseless at her Highness's feet.

CHAPTER VI

THE WEB

"While hunters bold ride homeward with the spoil;
While bugles ring, and forest echoes cry;
While mowers laugh, while reapers sing and toil;
While vintage bands go, like a revel, by;
While bridals pass, while poor men bless,
While Yule is blithe, while summer fair,
Oh! would'st thou change the flowing songs of peace
For triumphs, and—despair?"

—FREDERICK TENNYSON.

IT was a sinister ending to the merriment, and the guests hurrying away from the castle whispered that the shabby stranger must have brought news of dire import. It seemed that he had ridden to the gate on a steed so wretchedly weary that the ostlers, who had led the trembling animal to the stables, had feared that the poor beast would die incontinent. The rider himself had refused food and rest, had drained a cup of sack, had changed his dusty garments, and had hurried to the Hall of Mirrors. Such haste, such neglect of self, proclaimed him to be the bearer of disastrous tidings, the guests contended.

In the Hall of Mirrors the waxen candles flared and guttered in the silver sockets, and the dawn peeped through the windows at a group of persons in gay attire standing around a haggard man in a shabby doublet. Her Highness Elizabeth, seated in the gilded chair, whence a short hour since she had watched the volte dancers, leaned her head wearily on her hand. Louise Juliane stood near, and her hand rested on Prince Friedrich's shoulder. Old Prince Christian of Anhalt, with frowning brows, stood erect and fierce, his eyes aflame with hatred and anger. Prince Christel stood behind her Highness's chair; Master Scultetus, sombre and grim, and Count Schomberg were

there, and Amalia Solms, who clung to my Lady of Harrington in hysterical fear. Captain Bell, returned to consciousness, had been plied with food and wine, and now was telling his story in quick, short sentences. He told how he had journeyed into England almost without drawing bridle, but that, arrived in London, he had found that King James was at Theobalds. The Duke of Buckingham, however, had been at his lodging in the Palace of Whitehall, and Bell had craved audience of his Grace, which had been promised. He had waited four days in the duke's antechamber, but the crowd of petitioners had been so great that each day he had been sent away without speech of his Grace. "I had no gold—or not enough to purchase such an honour," he said bitterly. At last he had hidden in the embrasure of one of the windows, and after waiting many hours had been rewarded by seeing my lord duke come into the antechamber on his way to his barge, which waited at the river steps. He had flung himself on his knees before Buckingham, and though the attendants had endeavoured to drag him away, his loud cry that he sought not office or advancement, but that he brought news of her Highness Palatine, had arrested the duke's attention. He had shown him the papers and told his story, and his Grace had despatched him to Theobalds with credentials which procured him immediate audience of King James.

"I found his Majesty in the gardens in the midst of a game of bowls, and in the intervals of the game his Majesty listened to my tale and glanced at the papers. He averred that it was all a trumped-up history. There was one document in Latin, and the King was soon engaged in pointing out the faults of grammar and style therein. He rated me soundly when I said I knew little of Latin, and he then plunged into a learned discourse on the 'dear humanities,' and the necessity of learning for the proper understanding of life. I cried out that an none hastened to stay the Lady Elizabeth's journey to the Imperial Court, her understanding of life would be completed by the knowledge of death; but his Majesty in wrath bade me begone, saying that haste and wisdom did ne'er walk hand in hand

—that I had haste and he had wisdom. He named me a 'domned fule,'" Bell added, with a short laugh. Her Highness smiled.

"You bring me a very breath of home, sir," she said lightly; "but hasten to the end of your story."

"Well, madame, I rode back to London to his Grace of Buckingham, gave him the papers, and set myself to wait. Days passed, and at length I decided to return hither and tell your Highness what had occurred, and the very morning I was prepared to depart I was summoned to Whitehall to his Majesty. News had come, both from Vienna and from Sir Henry Wotton out of Italy, that there was something afoot against your Highness, and this, taken with the papers I had brought, convinced his Majesty of the danger. The poison is ready, madame; Death awaits you at Ratisbon, or wherever you visit the Imperial Court."

"Have you no letter from his Majesty?" inquired her Highness.

"Your pardon, madame!" Bell answered, "I have despatches here. Forgive me; but I have ridden from Whitehall in six days, and I am near mad with weariness."

"Sir, I thank you for your devotion," said Elizabeth kindly, "and I will not go to Ratisbon!" A tear stole down her cheek.

"Dear my heart!" whispered Friedrich, "you are weary and alarmed by this fearful thing. Do not weep, sweet madame, you are safe here."

"Nay, I but give a tear to Fate, who always prevents my diverting myself! I will not go to Ratisbon, but I am mighty loth to give up the jaunt. Good lack! I vow I am weary of safety!" she cried.

. . . . . .

Thus it fell out that the projected journey to the Imperial Court did not take place. Once more life at Heidelberg resumed its peaceful course; albeit a breath of unrest, an unwonted sense of some unnamed menace, seemed to brood over all. The hunts and banquets, the long quiet days of drowsy peace went their accustomed

way, and no events of importance came to rob Heidelberg of its easy, happy security of commonplace, familiar life. And yet, from the hour when Bell had interrupted the dancing in the Hall of Mirrors, there was some elusive hint of danger and change underlying the stillness. Louise Juliane, during her frequent visits to the Castle, felt this undefined menace; her Highness Elizabeth, too, was aware of it, but she ascribed it to the restless weariness which prolonged monotony, even of ease, breeds in "a living woman," as she said. To evade this irksome sense of pending evil she flung herself even more than of yore into gaieties. There was hunting, dancing, play-acting, and merry journeys to Amberg; inspections of the stronghold at Mannheim; secret visits to Frankfurt, where her Highness went disguised in a burgher-dame's sober gown of mokkadoe, with no fardingale but ample skirts, and on her head a broad-brimmed plain hat, and to hide her laughing face her black-velvet mask. This latter spoiled the disguise of an ordinary burgher's wife; but in the crowded narrow streets few stayed to notice, and if they did observe her, the merchants believed that she was some patrician's lady playing her naughty pranks, and well disguised for fear of her good man's ire.

Yet no merrymaking and diversion could hide from the whole Court that Prince Friedrich was morose and anxious, and that each day his confabulations with Master Scultetus grew longer. Constantly messengers arrived bearing important letters from all parts of Europe, and often the grey dawn came through the windows of his Highness's writing-room, and peered at the wan young face bending over a pile of closely written sheets, while a harsh-featured, black-clad Calvinist stood near, like the incarnation of care and inexorable purpose. Above this writing-room was a chamber where, in a great damask-hung bed, a woman lay asleep—so the dawn saw—and could the peering Dawn have looked into the man's heart, she would have seen that he laboured and intrigued but to make this woman a queen; though had the Dawn been able to read the man's thoughts, she would have found that he

called his lover's ambition by the name of Religion, for so did the heart trick the brain.

Small marvel that Prince Friedrich's brow was clouded with anxiety, for, as Juliane had long dreaded, he was being steadily sucked into the whirlpool of European intrigue. It was about this time that Count Ernest Mansfeld came to Heidelberg. His father had been a boon companion of Friedrich IV. of the Palatine, but the bastard Ernest Mansfeld had spent years in the service of many masters, and had found no occasion to visit Heidelberg, the abode of peace. War was his art, and he was a famous and skilful captain. Her Highness Elizabeth was amused and attracted by the soldier of fortune's recklessness, and he, on his side, fell a victim to her potent charm. She named him "Monsieur le Brigand," and he rejoined shrewdly that a brigand's sword was sometimes a surer friend than many a prince's. Old Christian of Anhalt, who, having been out with the Palatine troops in the Cleves-Jülich Succession affair, considered himself a great captain, though, in truth, he had scarce smelled the scent of powder and carnage, and had never led even a company into battle—old Anhalt frowned at the condottiere's audacious saying, and from that day forward held him in disfavour.

The Princes of the Protestant Union were frequent visitors at Heidelberg at this time. There came his Highness the Elector of Saxony, rough, uncouth, a devout lover of the flowing bowl, and a very Nimrod of the chase; but when for an hour he was not hunting, nor his brain swamped in liquor, he was a shrewd, unscrupulous man. Even in his cups he could hold long theological discourses with Master Scultetus, and high words were often exchanged, for John George of Saxony was a convinced Lutheran, and he hated Calvinistic dogma almost more than the doctrine of the Church of Rome. Caustic sayings, too, passed between him and old Anhalt, for the Saxon was well disposed towards the House of Hapsburg, and Anhalt knew no measure in his hatred of the "Austrian oppressors," as he named them.

The Bohemians had offered their crown in 1614 to John George; but the Saxon, partly too loyal to the Emperor, partly too lazy and attached to his drunken ease, or perchance too wily, in or out of his cups, had refused the offer; and after years of intrigue by all parties, Ferdinand of Styria had at length been crowned King of Bohemia in 1617.

Another personage who often sojourned at Heidelberg's Court was Prince Friedrich's brother-in-law, George William, son of the Elector of Brandenburg. A feeble, undistinguished creature this Hohenzollern, a man for ever fearful of committing himself. "Our fond brother sits eternally on a stile between two fields," Elizabeth was wont to say of him. "He could ne'er be a foe save through fear for his own skin, but God grant I may never need to depend on his friendship!" Alas! it was destined that she should turn to George William of Brandenburg in her direst need, and find him so weak a friend that a generous and chivalrous foe would have stood her in better stead.

The Princes of the Union were much occupied with Bohemian affairs, and Friedrich of the Palatinate in especial concerned himself with this sorry business. Urged by Scultetus, he had repeatedly sent monies to aid the Bohemian church-builders, and he had secretly encouraged the malcontent nobles to hope for his help, if their disaffection towards the Emperor should end in open revolt. In fact Heidelberg, from being a court of love and gaiety, had become the gloomy centre of Protestant intrigue; and Friedrich, feeble, honest, rash, and enthusiastic, was the unstable pivot whereon the machinations of Europe turned —a frail pivot, bent for ever in one direction by a strong, relentless hand, by the fierce, bony fingers of Scultetus, the bigoted, ambitious Calvinist. Wretched pivot! a man with a heart burning with a woman's beauty, and a weak, ardent soul tortured by a cruel religion!

Europe was a maze of intrigue at this time: intrigues in England for and against the Spanish match between Prince Charles and the Infanta; France intriguing for his marriage with a French princess; Holland negotiating for

his hand for a German highness; and all this matrimonial web around the actual prizes of ducats, religion, power. The Duke of Savoy was intriguing to become emperor himself, and in secret documents was assigning the crown of Bohemia to Prince Friedrich; or in a second mysterious arrangement he allotted Hungary to Friedrich, besides Alsace and a slice of Austria, while for himself he decided to take Bohemia. The Catholic princes of the League also amused themselves with reportioning Central Europe, at the expense, of course, of the Protestant princes. And all these plans and plots were brought to Heidelberg in confidential writings and by secret messengers from the Protestant schemers, and by spies upon the Catholic party. Openly Europe was at peace, but men's hearts were black with lust of power, and religion fired the slime of greedy ambition till it rose up in a boiling vapour and hung over the world as a lowering cloud of war.

For many months the talk at Heidelberg had been of the new Protestant churches in Bohemia. Not only in the council chamber with Master Scultetus, but at the banquet board and in her Highness's presence the question was endlessly discussed.

"My lord, my dear lord! I am weary of Braunau and Klostergrab!" Elizabeth cried one day. But the shadow on Prince Friedrich's brow deepened, and her Highness set herself to listen patiently.

"The whole future of Protestantism depends upon the settlements regarding these two churches, madame," Scultetus said.

"Tell me, then, Hochwürden; I am not clear as to the facts," she answered a little wearily. It was a grey, unfriendly March day, and the wind howled dismally round the "Dicke Thurm" and shook the windows of her Highness's withdrawing room. Elizabeth sat at her embroidery frame, and Prince Friedrich had drawn a low tabouret and sat near her. A log-fire blazed in the open grate, and Jacko the monkey crouched close to the warmth. Her Highness's spaniel lay at her feet, eyeing Master Scultetus' thin legs with an unfriendly gaze. Ever and anon a burst

of laughter came from the ante-chamber, and Prince Christel's voice was heard as he jested with the courtiers.

"Your highness may remember that the Braunau and Klostergrab affair has been playing some time?" Scultetus began.

"We have spoken of it for the last hundred and ten years, methinks, sir," Elizabeth interrupted lightly. Scultetus stared at her for a moment in a puzzled way; then his stern face grew sterner.

"This is no laughing matter, madame," he said harshly. "Our persecuted brethren in Bohemia——"

Again she interrupted.

"My persecuted brethren, Master Scultetus; they are Lutherans and therefore my brethren. Whatever you may be to the Bohemians, you are no friend to German Lutherans, sir; your Calvinistic conscience forbids it!"

"Your Highness," he answered gravely, though a flush of embarrassment glowed on his lean cheek, "your Highness, the cause of religious freedom, the strife against the scarlet woman of Rome, enlists our united strength. We do not remember the errors of Luther when we are fighting side by side with Lutherans against the thrice-accursed idolatry of Rome."

"Then, sir, I am to understand that it is only during times of peace that Calvinists and Lutherans revile one another; nay, would kill each other an they could," she said coldly.

"Alas, madame, we fight Luther's lax rule, his Popish ritual which the Lutherans have retained from the hideous ceremonies of olden time. But when Rome oppresses we must needs join hands to fight Antichrist," he answered.

"Master Scultetus, a Church divided against itself can never conquer a Church united," she replied quietly.

"The Word of God shall triumph in the end! When Romish error has vanished with the other heathen idolatries, then shall the pure and perfect teaching of Calvin speak so plainly to the misled Lutherans that they will voluntarily renounce their errors," he said. Her Highness's

hand fell listlessly from her embroidery, she leaned her head against the back of her chair.

"I am no theologian, sir; I beg you expound the history of Braunau and Klostergrab," she said, and a sigh of weariness parted her lips.

"As your Highness is aware, the Protestants of Braunau had built a tabernacle unto the Lord. The Popish abbot of the monastery at Braunau, after cruelly persecuting the builders, denounced them to the Emperor. His Majesty handed over the matter to the Archbishop of Prague. This servant of Belial was already wickedly incensed because the Lutherans, relying on the permission to build contained in the Letter of Majesty of 1609, had builded a church in the archbishop's see at Klostergrab. First the iniquitous prelate caused both churches to be closed and the doors sealed with his seal. Then, when our oppressed brethren broke into their own churches and preached the Word, the vile archpriest ordered the churches to be demolished. In three days the sacred edifices were razed to the ground—in three days the work of years was destroyed! The children of God stood by and could not save the holy buildings from the wrath of the ungodly." Scultetus sprang up in his excitement; raising his arm in a gesture of menace, he shouted: "Accursed be the destroyers! The vengeance of God be upon them!" With a snarl her Highness's spaniel rushed at the exalted divine's legs and buried his teeth in his Reverence's black gaiters.

"Curly, come here! Curly, you master-scoundrel, come back!" called her Highness, but the little brown dog held fast. Scultetus stood trembling.

"Call him off, madame, for Christ's sake! He will do me a hurt!" he shrilled.

"Curly — will you come? Oh! you little monster, leave hold!" her Highness said, but her voice was choked with laughter. "He will not hurt you, sir, he is old and his teeth are weak; he cannot bite through your gaiters. Curly, come here!" She rose, and, catching up the little dog, gave him a few soft taps on his blunt brown nose.

Elizabeth, like all the Stuarts, had such a tenderness for animals that even when she punished them the whipping seemed to be a series of caresses. But Curly cowered to her breast and whined piteously. There are some human souls which are so closely knit to the faithful dogs' souls that there is no need for blows to inflict punishment; the patient dependent dog-soul is chastised enough by the knowledge that that wonderful all-powerful being "his master" is displeased.

"There, sir," cried Elizabeth to the irate preacher, who stood rubbing his gaitered leg—"there, sir, I have punished Curly severely."

"Your pardon, Hochwürden!" said Prince Friedrich, "but indeed her Highness has beaten the offender cruelly." He laughed; then, bending close to Elizabeth, he whispered: "Curly is a thief, madame ma mie, for so delicious a beating I would give a day of my life."

"Dear heart, I could ne'er beat you even thus," she murmured, with a glance of tenderness at Friedrich's dark face.

Peace restored, Master Scultetus recommenced his story. He told how the Bohemian Protestants had appointed commissioners, styled defenders, to negotiate terms with the Emperor. At the head of these defenders Count Thurn had repaired to the Imperial Court, and had laid a statement of the Protestant grievances before his Majesty; the Emperor had given as answer the legal quibble that by the Letter of Majesty, though the Protestants were entitled to build on Crown land, this permission did not extend to the building of "heretical barns" on lands rightfully held by the holy Roman Church. Further, his Majesty had announced that as the Bohemian nobles claimed the right of appointing both pastors and cult on their estates, he would henceforth not be less than his own nobles and would force the true religion on all his subjects.

"The whole of Bohemia is smouldering in revolt," continued Scultetus. "The pastors expelled from their parishes on Crown lands are wandering over the country seeking refuge on the estates of the Protestant nobles.

The peasants are fleeing before the oppressor, but those who have not deserted their homes are driven to the abominable mass by Imperial soldiers, are driven before the whip, madame; and there are cases where the soldiers have thrown away their whips and goaded the saintly martyrs at the sword's point. Truly the children of God have entered into the house of bondage!"

"And these are good peaceful men who but ask for freedom of worship?" queried her Highness.

"Madame, the Bohemians have never been at peace, for they have always been oppressed," Scultetus answered solemnly.

"But, sir, the Emperor Matthias is a gentle, peaceful man; doubt you that, an he knew aright the cruelties practised in his name, he would not show mercy?" she asked.

"There is no mercy in the adherents of the Church of Satan," he replied harshly. Her Highness sighed; she doubted if an abundance of mercy was stored in the Calvinist's soul.

"Madame, we shall see if the Emperor can be moved by a true statement of the case. Three weeks ago the defenders summoned a meeting of the Bohemian Protestants, and they drew up a document which will be presented to his Majesty. In May another meeting of God's elect is to be convened at Prague to discuss the imperial answer," he said.

"And if the answer is unfavourable?" she asked.

"War, madame! War for our conscience' sake! With blood we will avenge the unchristian cruelties of our idolatrous foes," he said sternly.

"Alas, sir, murder for Christ's sake?" she said in a low voice.

"The meek Saviour shall battle with us for the truth, and the idolaters shall perish and burn for ever in the flames of hell!" he cried wildly. Prince Friedrich's eyes glowed with a fierce light. But Elizabeth Stuart sighed,

. . . . . .

Protestant Europe awaited the Emperor's answer anxiously. It was whispered that if his Majesty persisted

in his course of oppression of the turbulent Bohemian Lutherans, the Protestant Princes of the Union would be obliged, for their honour's sake, to fly to arms in the cause of their co-religionists. More moderate men objected that the Bohemians were an unruly race, and that their religious tenets were but the pretext of their revolt against the hated House of Hapsburg. What madness, said these wise ones, what madness to plunge Germany into warfare for the sake of a handful of fanatical malcontents! But there were other voices whispering of material advantages to the Protestant Princes to be gained by a religious war with Austria. The Duke of Bouillon urged his kinsman Friedrich of the Palatinate to wrest a kingdom for himself out of the Hapsburg holding; and the Duke of Savoy intrigued and lusted after increase of power.

Spring came, and in spite of Friedrich's anxious face, of Scultetus' sombre words, and of Duke Christian of Anhalt's diatribes against the House of Hapsburg, the Court of Heidelberg made merry, and Elizabeth, joying in spring's pageant, laughed and jested, forgetting the cloud which hovered over the world, that war-cloud which hung on the word of an aged, ailing man, on the yea or nay of the Emperor Matthias to the Bohemian Lutherans. The long, low hills round Heidelberg were blossom-crowned, the castle gardens were filled with the fragrance of the first roses, the quiet Neckar flowed between the green banks. Elizabeth Stuart, returned from her ride through the woods, stood on the broad terrace overlooking the valley.

"What a peace there is over the world to-day, Christel," she said to young Anhalt as she drew off her gauntlet and stroked the spaniel Curly's head.

"It is very beautiful, cousin," Prince Christian answered; "and yet my father would have me leave you and go seek some work, some soldier's honour."

"But where would he have you go? There is little doing in the world just now," she said thoughtfully. "Even Mansfeld's troops are lying fallow."

As she spoke the sound of loud voices broke the stillness, and Prince Friedrich, followed by Scultetus and Duke

Christian, came through the archway from the courtyard. The Palsgrave's face was flushed, and he held a bundle of papers in his hand.

"News, madame!" he cried excitedly. "Splendid news from Bohemia! Our brethren have defied the oppressor, and now the Truth shall triumph."

Elizabeth glanced at Scultetus. Though it was Prince Friedrich who spoke, she recognised the words as an echo of his Reverence's utterances.

"Has the Emperor's answer arrived, sir?" she said quickly.

"It has come, and our answer to him has been given—given gloriously!" cried Friedrich.

"What is the answer?" she asked, and her breath came fast between her parted lips.

"Death gave the answer, madame!" said Scultetus, and his harsh voice sounded as a knell. Then in rapid words he told the story of the Defenestration at Prague. He told how the news had come to Prague that the Emperor's answer was uncompromisingly hostile to the Lutherans; that Count Thurn, receiving this information, had convened the nobles secretly, and that in this assembly it had been agreed that the document had been drawn up at Prague by the hated Lord High Justice of Bohemia, Slavata, and his colleague, Martinitz Burggraf of Karlstein, and that the Emperor had but signed this mandate. The Protestant conspirators had unanimously condemned these imperial agents to death as traitors to Bohemian liberty. Early in the morning of May 23rd the Imperial agents had assembled in the Council Hall of the Hradcány at Prague, and had awaited the Protestant noblemen. There had been four Emperor's men, to wit: Diepold von Lobkowitz, Grand Prior of the Order of Malta; Adam von Steinberg, the premier noble of Bohemia; the hated Slavata, and Martinitz. To their surprise, when the numerous Lutheran nobles had entered the hall, they had seen that they had come fully armed, contrary to the imperial prescription which forbade the bearing of arms in the council chamber. Count Thurn had opened the pro-

ceedings by demanding whether the mandate, the formal reading whereof he and his associates had repaired to hear, had been written in Vienna. Without giving the Imperial Councillors time to reply, he had denounced them as traitors to Bohemia. Then in thunderous tones he had demanded if they could, on their oath, affirm that the mandate had been written in Vienna.

With dignity the Imperial Councillors had replied that they were bound by solemn oath never to divulge the business of the council. Their sole duty was to proclaim and enforce the imperial edicts.

With a yell of fury the Lutherans had rushed forward and had threatened the councillors with instant death if they refused to answer. After a few moments' whispered consultation Lobkowitz had replied, in the name of his fellow-councillors, that, yielding to overwhelming numbers, they would give answer to the preposterous question, and their answer was that the document had been entirely drawn up, written, and signed in Vienna. If the Lutherans desired further information on the subject, they must journey to Vienna and interrogate his Majesty himself.

For an instant the hostile crowd of nobles had hung back. They had thought to have proved the councillors to have been the authors of the mandate, and as such to have condemned them to instant death as enemies to Bohemia. Now Paul von Rican, a zealous Lutheran, had sprung forward and had reminded the assembly how, in 1609, Slavata and Martinitz alone of all the Bohemian nobles had refused to sign the Bond of Peace which had been agreed to and signed by the entire Bohemian nobility, both Lutheran and Catholic. This, he asserted, was sufficient proof of their treason to Bohemia. Again the deafening clamour had arisen from the Lutherans, and loud voices demanded the execution of these enemies of the nation.

"Alas! that 'der Lange' (the Imperial Chancellor Zdeneck von Lobkowitz) is not here to share their fate!" many had shouted. But fortunately for himself the Chancellor was in Vienna. Now Diepold von Lobkowitz and

Adam von Steinberg had been forcibly ejected from the council chamber, and the nobles had thrown themselves upon the defenceless Slavata and Martinitz. Half a hundred daggers had been at their throats when some one had cried out that it were impious to stain Bohemia's council chamber with blood. A fearful struggle had ensued, but steadily the victims had been dragged to the windows overlooking the courtyard. The Imperial Secretary Fabrizius had implored Count Schlick to show mercy to the councillors, but the wretched underling clerk, for his pains, had been seized and dragged towards the windows. Slavata had clung desperately to the ledge, but his assailants had ruthlessly loosed his clinging hands and had flung him down—down a hundred feet into the courtyard below. From another window Martinitz had been hurled to his doom, and Fabrizius, the harmless, subordinate clerk, had been dashed headlong after his masters. For an instant the accomplishment of their design had sobered the fury of God's gentle Lutheran lambs. But their righteous wrath had broken forth again when they had seen the Romish criminals crawl away, if not unharmed, at least alive.

"Dauntless in their just vengeance," cried Scultetus, "Count Thurn and a number of nobles hurried away to complete the execution, while those who remained at the windows fired their pistols repeatedly at the condemned traitors. But Martinitz and the secretary escaped, and some of the Chancellor's servants carried Slavata to their master's neighbouring house. Soon Count Thurn and his adherents were thundering at the closed doors. A window was flung open, and Dame Polixena von Lobkowitz, an abandoned Romish woman, wife to the iniquitous Chancellor, appeared. "You shall kill me an you will, but I will never give up to you a dying man, a man who is a friend and kinsman to you as to me," she said. Thurn in his meek Christian mercy gave her answer that justice had been done if the traitor Slavata were indeed a dying man. She cried out that God's angels had borne up Slavata and saved him that he might die in peace after receiving the

sacraments of his Church. Angels!" Scultetus laughed hoarsely; "Satan himself aids the Papists. Know you, madame, what saved the ungodly in their fall? A dung-heap! There was a dung-heap beneath the windows of the Hradcány, and into this foul bed the oppressors fell soft!"

"But they live, master? You said that death had answered?" her Highness queried with blanched lips.

"Death has spoken, though by Satan's will the dying Slavata[1] lived to taste the horrible mockery of the so-called sacrament. Death has spoken, nay, more! Death riding the mighty steed of War rides through Bohemia. Death crushes the heathen and deals punishment to the idolaters, to the votaries of Antichrist," he thundered.

"Vengeance on the House of Hapsburg!" cried Duke Christian of Anhalt, and, drawing his sword, he kissed the blade so fiercely that his mouth left a trace of blood upon the steel.

"Honour and freedom for the true Faith!" cried Frierich, and, snatching the sword from Anhalt, he kissed it reverently. He started, and with a stifled exclamation let the sword fall to the ground and drew his hand across his face; his lips had touched the wet stain on the blade, and the taste of blood was bitter in his mouth.

"Swear, you wanton boy!" roared Anhalt to Prince Christel. "Swear to do battle in this holy war against the accursed Hapsburgs." He bent and raised the sword from the ground. "Swear!" he said sternly, and held the blade to his son's lips.

"Where my cousin of the Palatinate leads, there will I follow till death," Christel said, and his blue eyes rested sadly on Elizabeth Stuart as he kissed the sword.

[1] As a fact William Slavata lived to the age of ninety, and wrote in the Bohemian language his memoirs, wherein he gave his version of the Defenestration, and a bitterly hostile account of King Friedrich's reign. He also compiled a history of Bohemia in twelve volumes.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT WAR'S PRELUDE

"Now o'er the palsied earth stalks Giant Fear,
With War and Woe and Terror in his train."

—SHELLEY.

DEATH, riding the mighty steed of War, thundered through Bohemia, and from far and wide came Death's grim servitors, those hordes of mercenary soldiers whose trade was bloodshed. At Heidelberg messengers from the insurgents arrived daily, and the talk of castle and of town was endlessly of Bohemian affairs. The cloud on Prince Friedrich's brow deepened, and her Highness vowed that she had lost a husband and found a gloomy statesman in his stead. She jested, but what irked her was the haunting feeling that there were projects afoot which Friedrich, Master Scultetus, and old Anhalt kept from her knowledge.

One night Elizabeth was restless, and the more she wooed the god of sleep, the more the fiend of wakefulness tormented her. All the distorted imaginings which lurk in the brain to torture the wakeful came to her. Was something terrible going to befall her? She remembered the old saying that the Stuarts were gifted with second sight. Was some revelation of impending doom coming to her? She recalled the Lady of Harrington's calm smile when she had asked her if this mysterious divination lived in the Stuart race.

"They might have been wiser men had they possessed it, sweet child; but God in His mercy withholds all knowledge of our destiny. Second sight, forsooth! It is an old wife's tale, and contrary to both religion and good sense," she had answered. If only the Lady of Harrington had been still in Heidelberg, Elizabeth would have

gone to her and poured out her doleful ponderings, and sure, one half-hour of her placid reasoning would have banished all forebodings. But Lady Harrington had returned to England. Then came the thought of her beloved friend, and the ever-present sadness of her death: "Anne, sweet Anne Dudley!" her Highness murmured, "it was a cruel God who took you from me. I need you, dear one!" Impatiently Elizabeth threw back the embroidered coverlet. Mental anguish turned to physical discomfort, and she felt breathless and oppressed. She pushed aside the heavy damask curtain of her bed and listened anxiously. Silence wrapped the world, and yet some undefined sense of stirring haunted her. She rose, and feeling her way through the darkness to the window, she opened her casement and leaned out. The night breeze wafted the scent of roses to her.

"How still it is," she whispered. Below her the terraced garden seemed to dream deliciously in the white moonlight, long shadows fell athwart the pathways from the statues, the fountains were not playing, silence reigned. For some time Elizabeth Stuart leaned out of her casement, the fragrant night air calmed her restlessness, and like a gentle hand sleep weighed down her tired eyelids.

"I shall rest now," she told herself; but as she laid her hand upon the window, meaning to close it, her attention was attracted by two figures which were moving stealthily through the gardens. Their shadows fell black and grotesque on the whiteness of the moonlit pathway. The casement creaked beneath her Highness's touch, and she saw how the men started and drew back into the shadow of the terrace wall. After a moment they reappeared, and continued their silent, cautious progress. It struck her that one of the newcomers was known to her. Where had she seen that short, thick-set figure, the one shoulder hunched to the large head? Impossible! who could identify a man in a black cloak and with a slouch hat crushed down on his head? They were close beneath her now. She leaned eagerly from out the casement. The intruders paused, as though they waited for some signal. After a brief moment

they passed into the shadow cast by the "English Palace," where she was. She waited, expecting them to emerge again, but it seemed that the shadow had swallowed them. Then she heard the click of a key turning in a lock, and immediately afterwards the muffled bang of a carefully closed door. Her Highness started. She recognised the sound as that of the small heavy garden door leading to that portion of the English Palace where was situated Prince Friedrich's dwelling. What sought those black-cloaked strangers at dead of night in the palace? What meant that secrecy? Who had admitted them? Who had closed the door so carefully and stealthily? Fear gripped her heart and sent the blood surging in painful throbs to her temples. Conspiracy!—Murder!

She sprang forward, and catching up a velvet cloak which lay on a chair near she flung it round her and swiftly fled from her chamber into the marbled corridor. She paused to listen. Deep silence; and like a stifling pall the blackness of night! Only on the far side of the courtyard the moon peered over the high gables of the castle and shed her wan light upon the windows of the Otto Heinrich's Bau.

Elizabeth opened the narrow door onto the steep winding stairway which led from her apartments to Friedrich's dwelling rooms. Darkness enshrouded her, but she felt her way by groping against the rough stonework of the wall. When she reached the door of his Highness's antehall she listened. There was no sound. Her knees bent beneath her like a sick woman's. Those cloaked night-birds—those stealthy figures were in the palace, here, near her, and they gave no sign. She wrenched open the door. Still no light and no sound.

"Friedrich!" she called, and she heard her own voice, weak, tremulous, hardly above a whisper though she had tried to call loudly. She felt her way across the room; once she stumbled heavily against a chair.

"Friedrich!" she called again. Her eyes, grown used to the blackness, noticed now a faint line of light on the threshold of his Highness's writing closet; guided by it she

found her way to the door. The handle turned loosely in her grasp, but the door remained fast. Fear made her hands feel weak and limp, yet she smote on the panels fiercely.

"Friedrich! Are you there? Open! Let me in!" she cried. For an instant there was no response; then she heard the sound of a footfall, and his Highness's voice answered camly:

"What would you, dear heart? I am at work with Master Scultetus."

"Let me in!" she called. "I must speak with you!" She heard the hiss of a whispered consultation, then slowly the inner bolts were withdrawn and the door was opened.

"Strangers have just been admitted secretly," she began hurriedly, then she paused as her eyes fell on two figures standing in the shadow beyond the circle of light thrown by the waxen tapers on the table. One figure moved forward.

"Your Highness, I crave forgiveness for this nocturnal visitation," the man said.

"My Lord of Mansfeld!" she cried in surprise. "Sir, why do you come like a thief in the night?" She saw how Mansfeld's eyes sought Prince Friedrich's as if in question, and how they both half turned to Scultetus as though seeking advice.

"What do you here so secretly? What is afoot?" she cried angrily. "I will not be banished from all knowlege as if I were a prating child. What is your errand, gentlemen?" she added in a haughty tone. Prince Friedrich laid his hand gently on her arm.

"Count Mansfeld arrived late—unexpectedly——" he began in a timid, uncertain voice. She cast him a scornful glance.

"I saw these gentlemen arrive, I saw the secrecy wherewith they were admitted! Some one expected them, and helped them in their mysterious entry! It was so stealthily done that I feared some dark conspiracy. Tut, sirs! I will not brook such slinking in my house! Tell me your errand," she commanded. Scultetus came forward.

"Indeed, madame, these are affairs of State——"

"And no matters for women's meddling," interruped old Anhalt roughly.

"Women, sir? Women! Do you count me as the good-wife of a burgher? I am a Princess of Great Britain, and mistress of this my Castle of Heidelberg, I would have you know!" she said proudly, and there was that in her tone which had rung in the voice of another Elizabeth, she whom men had named "King Elizabeth of England."

The men stood silent, abashed by her vehemence. The other stranger, who had hitherto remained half hidden in the shadow, came forward. He bowed obsequiously to her Highness, and spoke rapidly in Latin to Master Scultetus. Elizabeth caught the words: "Princeps Savoyae —mandat confidentialiter——"

"Nor is it our custom, signor," she said sharply, "for strangers to gabble before me in a tongue they believe I do not understand." An angry thought flashed through her mind. Why had her father forbidden her tutors to teach her Latin? She remembered James the Pedant's homilies against "all overlearned lassies." Of a truth, the British Solomon's wisdom was mighty unwise in daily use.

"I command you to tell me your errand," she repeated. "My lord count, I beg you to tell me." Her quick instinct had guessed right; Mansfeld was the only one of that group who would speak out. The others were silenced by many considerations, while he, the condottiere, having less to lose, cared less for concealment.

"It is only the purchase of a brigand's sword, madame," he said lightly.

In a flash it came to Elizabeth—the meaning of this midnight consultation, the sinister import of Mansfeld's secret presence, the reference to the Duke of Savoy. She had thought and spoken a hundred times of war, of the probability of a vast European conflict, but now the horror of the actuality of war touched her with its dread import of battle, murder, famine, and despair. For the first time she realised dimly what it would mean to her.

"We need no brigand's swords in peaceful Heidelberg,"

she said quickly. For answer Mansfeld pointed at the chart which lay spread out on the table. "Konigreich Böheim" was written thereon. Mechanically her Highness passed her fingers across the parchment. With an exclamation she drew back; her hand had left a trace of blood upon the chart, a faint line of red from "Böheim" into the portion marked "Die Pfalz."

Prince Friedrich caught her hand and raised it towards the light. "You are wounded, beloved?" he cried axiously. She glanced at her hand.

"Probably I rasped my fingers against the stairway wall in the dark," she said indifferently. "That is an ugly omen," she added, pointing to the stain on the chart.

"Your Highness has already spilled her blood for the sake of the Faith," said Mansfeld, laughing.

"Sir, this is no time for impious jesting," interposed Scultetus.

"No, Master Scultetus," cried her Highness, "and no time for secrecy from me. I know right well wherefore my Lord of Mansfeld is summoned hither, and I claim full confidence in these affairs, which concern me no less than his Highness. Believe me," she turned with a shrewd smile to Mansfeld, "to tell a woman half a story is dangerous always; tell her everything, trust her, and she is honourably silent."

Old Anhalt flung out his hands in an angry gesture. To him the whole scene was puerile, trifling, incomprehensible. His life was centred in his hatred of the House of Hapsburg, and he feared and distrusted women. A man with his soul thus passionate with hatred is impossible for a woman to tamper with. But the other conspirators were different; they felt Elizabeth Stuart's fascination, they were compelled by it, and charm begets confidence, often to the ultimate discomfiture of the confider.

The negotiations were continued in her Highness's presence. It appeared that the Duke of Savoy proposed to sell Mansfeld and some two thousand well-armed, thoroughly trained troops. Prince Friedrich undertook

to bear the chief cost of the campaign, and to pay Savoy his price for ceding Mansfeld and his small army. None doubted the rebels' ultimate victory, as it was reckoned that if the enterprise were once well commenced, not only all the Princes of the Protestant Union, but England, Holland, and the Venetian Republic would join forces for the overthrow of the Hapsburgs and the triumph of the Reformed Faith. Then Friedrich would become King of Bohemia, and Savoy would annex Moravia and Silesia. The question of the Imperial purple was left undetermined, but it was tacitly understood that either Savoy or Prince Friedrich would become Emperor after the death of Matthias. In either case entire freedom was promised to the Reformed Churches, both Calvinistic and Lutheran. It appeared that most of the Princes of the Protestant Union were favourable to this project, but it was also evident that only Prince Friedrich had gone further than mere talk; only Friedrich had given arms and money to the Bohemian insurgents; only he and Savoy knew of Mansfeld's participation in the Bohemian revolt. It was a far different thing for Savoy, an independent Italian prince, to enter into this intrigue; for him there was everything to be gained and nothing to lose; whereas Friedrich, Prince of the Empire, risked all, for in case of defeat he stood in danger of the ban of the empire, which meant the forfeiture of his Electorate and of his possessions. This Friedrich set forth in halting words that night, but Scultetus, ever ready to play on the ardent heart of his pupil, spoke of the advantages to the Reformed Church, of how the Princes of the Protestant Union, for very shame, could never abandon their brethren in Faith; and Friedrich's enthusiasm, as usual, took fire, fed by this fuel, while the real and ever smouldering spark was his unspoken ambition to crown Elizabeth queen. So the pact was signed and sealed, and Mansfeld despatched to Bohemia.

That summer good news came to Heidelberg, Count Thurn, commander-in-chief of the Bohemian forces, laid siege to Budweis, and took the town of Krumau. The

nobles of Austria, for the most part Protestant, refused passage to the Hapsburg army, and it was August before Bucquoi led the Imperial troops through Moravia into Bohemia. Moravia was half-hearted, for although a Protestant land it was entirely swayed by Zerotin, a Protestant too, but a faithful adherent of the Hapsburgs. The campaign went all too slowly for the ardent schemers at Heidelberg, and the summer passed without any decisive action. Bucquoi and the Imperial army sought battle, but Count Thurn and his Bohemians hung back, feeling themselves too weak in numbers. Bohemia, supporting two armies, was given over to rapine and famine. September came and there was still no change, then in October the Silesians decided to espouse openly the Bohemian cause; and then, at last, in November Bucquoi was defeated by Thurn near Budweis; and on the heels of the welcome messenger who brought this news to waiting Heidelberg came another rider with despatches telling how Mansfeld had captured the town of Pilsen. It was glorious news; for Bucquoi, now cut off from Vienna, was a victim waiting to be crushed by those two giant hands, Thurn and Mansfeld. Glorious news again! Thurn had invaded Austria. He had left troops to watch over the defeated Bucquoi, and, counting on the support of the disaffected Austrian nobility, he was marching to Vienna. The doom of Hapsburg seemed assured, and old Anhalt, drunk with vengeance on the hated House, already spoke of the glory of the coming Protestant empire; and Scultetus fed Friedrich's vision with word pictures of Elizabeth Stuart as the first Protestant empress.

But Death had not sated his lust with the few Bohemian battles. It was not enough, and Death dismounted his grim steed of Warfare, and dipping his dread sickle into the poison of disease, mowed down the flower of the Bohemian army. Austria was better served by typhus than by Bucquoi. Consternation reigned in Heidelberg when these tidings came. Messengers arrived almost daily with accounts of the fearful condition of the Bohemian army—famine-stricken, unpaid, decimated by disease. It

was said that each day hundreds died of typhus. Gloom settled over Heidelberg, town and castle. Heavy, enervating weather added to the general depression; it was as though the whole country waited for something—for what no man knew. It was "thunder weather," as the peasants said, but no storm came to relieve the tension. For weeks the skies lowered sunless, unsmiling; and yet each evening, at what should have been set of sun, a dull glow as of a smouldering furnace lit the heavens to a sombre glory. They said that there were evil omens abroad. Had not the smithy's cow borne a calf with three heads? Had not an eagle flown against the castle flagstaff and fallen dead? This foreboded ill, for who did not know that the three-headed calf symbolised famine, disease, and ruin? None had seen the monstrous beast, but it had been born, they said, for all that. And the eagle? Ah! that meant death to the owner of Heidelberg Castle. Then a sentry told how he had heard a moaning voice in the castle moat at dead of night. All knew, too, that Van Somer's picture of her Highness as a little maiden had fallen from the wall, though both the nails and the cord which had held the frame were sound and strong. This presaged that her Highness's happy youth was ended, and that disaster would soon come to her.

Prince Friedrich and her Highness knew of these dismal sayings, and though they vowed them to be but impious, foolish talk, a little fear was mingled in their anxiety.

One autumn evening her Highness sat before her 'broidery-frame in her living-room in the English Palace. She was weary and oppressed, for she was approaching near to the time of her third confinement. Amalia Solms was patiently disentangling a silken skein which Curly, the spaniel, had played with. Prince Christel sat near, and on his knee lay Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World," but, though he turned the pages, he was not reading. There was too much a-happening in the world just then for thought to be given to the histories of bygone struggles. As usual the talk was of Bohemia and the revolt.

"And so Thurn is to return to Bohemia! Good lack! he hath gained little by wandering with his troops over half Austria. Better had he followed Bucquoi and finished his conquest," said her Highness musingly.

"Thurn had counted on the Austrian Protestants rising in a body and marching with him against the Imperialists. Half-hearted loons! But we can gauge their promises now," replied Christel.

"Surely your Grace must yearn to be in the thick of the fight?" queried the Solms in her nasal voice.

"Gracious Amalia, I obey orders by staying here," he answered quietly, though his cheek flushed.

"Oh, Amalia," cried Elizabeth Stuart impatiently, "it is not what you say which often angers me; it is your attitude of mind, your constant judgment of what does not concern you which makes you so sorry a friend."

"I regret, your Highness——," began the Solms in an offended tone.

Elizabeth interrupted her hastily. "Oh, for the dear God's sake cease regretting! You tread on people's toes and think you have eased their bruise by your regrets, but the toes ache for all your 'Ach! pardons!'" Elizabeth said half angrily, half laughingly.

"Really, your Highness, I do not comprehend——," began the Solms again.

"Ah, my dear, and that which we do not comprehend in such things no angel of God can teach us, methinks," broke in her Highness; "now, dear Amalia, go to my other ladies. I will call you anon—an I need you." The offended damsel retired.

"The Countess Amalia means I should be with Mansfeld," said Christel, "and, sweet cousin, God knows I wish I were."

"If you went now it would show the whole world how deeply implicated we are in the Bohemian revolt," she answered. "Nay, we will all fight, if Dohna returns out of England with good news of my father's intentions."

They fell to talking of the English mission. Dohna had been despatched to Whitehall to ascertain whether King

James intended to abide by his compact with the Princes of the Union, and to contribute troops and monies in the event of open hostilities between the Catholic and Protestant parties. As usual James procrastinated. In spite of his promises he was unwilling to commit himself, for he feared to spoil the chances of the Spanish alliance for the Prince of Wales, if he openly espoused the Protestant cause. In the face of the violent opposition of the Puritans, and indeed of all England, to the Spanish match, James clung to the idea. Partly the Infanta's dowry allured him; partly he regarded the House of Hapsburg as the most distinguished and magnificent in Europe, and it flattered his vanity to mate his son with a Hapsburg princess. Also he was the plaything of that astute diplomatist, the Spanish ambassador, Gondomar, who knew that Protestant Europe stood waiting for England's weight to be thrown into the political scales, and that while James hesitated, though the balance might oscillate, the actual overturning from peace to war would be averted. Meanwhile Spain, Austria, and Bavaria grew daily stronger and more prepared for war. It may be imagined Dohna had no easy task, and he wrote in despair that he could get no answer from James. His hands were tied, for as yet he durst make but scant mention of Prince Friedrich's dreams of the Bohemian crown, and thus when he approached James or Buckingham with his question of what England would do, he was easily silenced by the statement that there was, and would be, no war. Why should there be? What should bring war about?

For the nonce, even among the Heidelberg statesmen, the Bohemian project was not openly mentioned, though the subject was the ordinary gossip of all the Courts and towns of Europe. Even her Highness and Christel did not speak of it; in fact, it seemed to be but a far-off eventuality to them. They discussed Dohna's mission and the likelihood of the Spanish marriage; and while they spoke Christel's deft fingers were busy with a pencil, drawing the pattern of Elizabeth's wide, puffed sleeve on the margin of a page of "The History of the World." Her Highness

broke off in the political discussion with an exclamation:

"Christel, you wicked one!" she cried, "you spoil the book my father sent me out of England. See now! my sleeve portrayed opposite the solemn recital of Hannibal's wars!"[1]

She drew the book towards her as he held it out laughing. "Really, Christel!" she said merrily, "think of my father's ire an he knew!"

"Ah! cousin, even the hem of your sleeve is dearer to me than all the wisdom in the 'History of the World,'" he said.

"Christel, you are a foolish dear one," she answered, smiling.

At this moment a page appeared in the doorway. "His Highness bids me inform you, madame, that a deputation from Bohemia has arrived, and that his Highness will be occupied with State affairs till late this night, and begs you to hold him excused from attending upon you this evening." The boy delivered his message, bowed, and retired.

"State affairs," said her Highness. "Ah, well! God grant they may bring us good some day."

Silence fell between Elizabeth and Christel. In the courtyard the clock struck the hour heavily.

"It grows late," her Highness said. "Friedrich and his Bohemians will consult till midnight. Good night, dear Christel." She pushed away her embroidery frame and rose. "Draw back the curtain, cousin, and see if it rains."

As she spoke hurried footsteps rang out on the marble floor of the corridor. The door was flung open and Prince Friedrich burst into the room.

"It has come at last! A definite offer!" he cried breath-

[1] In the British Museum there is a copy of Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World" which belonged to Elizabeth Stuart. On the margin of page 417, opposite to the recital of Hannibal's wars, is a faint drawing of a woman's arm and hand. The sleeve matches, in all particulars, that in Mierevelt's picture of the Queen of Bohemia. This book was left at Prague by the Queen, and was brought to England in 1682 by a Jesuit priest, as is set forth on the flyleaf in a Latin inscription.

lessly. His cheeks were flushed and his brown eyes glowed with excitement.

"What has come? Who offers?" began her Highness in surprise.

"The offer of the Bohemian throne!" he answered impatiently. "They have elected me—in secret still, but they have decided to elect me! Queen of my heart, how sweet to crown thee queen in the sight of all men! No longer 'Goody Palsgrave,' as your mother said!" He was very young and winning in his boyish enthusiasm. The sombre influence of Calvinism, the shadow which intrigue and anxiety had cast over him for long months seemed to have fallen from his soul, and he was only the proud lover, eager, yearning to proclaim his lady a queen. Elizabeth stood silent for an instant.

"Care you not for a throne, dearling?" Prince Friedrich said. The flush faded from his weak, sensitive face, and the radiance of his eyes waned. As usual with him it needed but a look or a word to dash his exultation to hesitancy and despondence.

"It is not settled yet—I fear there is desperate risk—perchance I ought to refuse," he said slowly. Elizabeth's eyes flashed and she drew herself to her full height.

"He who has wed a king's daughter must have courage to climb the steps of a throne however slippery they may be!" she said haughtily. Once more Friedrich's enthusiasm flamed.

"You are right, and it shall ne'er be said that I feared kingship!" he cried. "I vow to accept the crown of Bohemia!"

Christel had stood silent and embarrassed while these words passed between his cousins; he now moved to the window, remembering Elizabeth's request that he should see if it rained. He drew back the heavy curtain. Flood-like a strange white glare lit the room, making the candle-flames seem like tiny pinnacles of yellow light. Both Elizabeth and Friedrich turned in surprise towards the window. There was something ghastly in the sudden white light. It

blanched Elizabeth's cheeks to deathliness, and Prince Friedrich's face seemed like a yellow, waxen mask.

"What is it, Christel?" cried her Highness. "What is this flare?" Christel opened the casement and leaned out. A discordance of sound came through the open window: cries and hoarse shouting, the frantic ringing of bells, and over all the long-drawn moan of a rising tempest. A gust of wind swept through the casement and abased the candle wicks to shuddering back-bent sheets of flame, and then extinguishing them, left the room lit only by the lurid glare from without. Christel clung to the casement frame, endeavouring to pull the window shut, but the wind tore it from his grasp and dashed it back against the palace wall. The second door of her Highness's room was thrown open, and her affrighted ladies hurried in.

"Madame! oh, madame! it is the end of the world!" wailed Amalia Solms.

"Be silent!" commanded her Highness sharply. Christel now succeeded in closing the casement, and the gale, with its accompaniment of panic sounds thus shut out, smote but faintly on the hearing.

"Is there a conflagration in the town?" asked Prince Friedrich. But none could answer him. Now Count Schomberg stood on the threshold. His face was grave and white.

"Your Highness," he said earnestly, "there is tumult in the town. A monstrous luminary hath appeared in the sky; it is like a giant finger of flame pointing at the castle. The people are crying out that it is God's scourge stick sent to warn us of Almighty wrath and vengeance. The people believe it is in punishment of your friendliness with the Bohemian rebels. Thousands of men have forced their way across the outer bridge; I do not know whether they found the gate open, or whether the sentries in their panic let them in."

Prince Friedrich, as usual, stood irresolute. His whole being was like a tarred beacon, which needs the spark from another's fire to kindle the dormant flame of courage and activity.

"What can be done? Where is Scultetus?" he said weakly. Some one hurried away to fetch the preacher.

And now, even through the closed windows, and louder than the yell of the wind, came the steady roar of many voices and the tramp of thousands of feet.

Old Anhalt pushed his way through the group of wailing women in the doorway.

"The townsfolk are in revolt," he cried; "they are clamouring at the inner gates. I have ordered the guard to fire on them if they do not disperse."

"In revolt? My Heidelbergers! It is incredible!" said Friedrich.

"Revolt!" cried Elizabeth; "they are mad with fear! Open the gates—let them in—let us show them that whatever befalls we are with them! You, my lord," she added, turning to Friedrich, "you go and speak with them."

At this moment Scultetus appeared on the scene. Prince Friedrich caught him by the arm.

"Will you speak to the citizens? I know not what to say," he said.

"Nor I, your Highness—they are riotous loons," the Calvinist answered. Elizabeth Stuart flung up her hands.

"The Lord have mercy upon you!" she cried angrily. "Must you all hesitate until a real revolt is upon us? Tell the people that it is our will to share their fate whatever it may be! Tell them that this strange star is another moon sent to guide our feet unto peace—through warfare into peace! Tell them anything you like, but tell them something! They will believe you—only do not stand there doing nothing!"

"Yes, yes! Master Scultetus, you hear? Her Highness is right—you must calm them—they are good people!" said Prince Friedrich hurriedly. "Open the gates! His reverence will speak with the citizens!"

"Summon them to the chapel! God's minister must speak to his flock from the pulpit," said Scultetus.

. . . . . .

The gates were opened, and the mob poured across the

inner drawbridge, where Prince Christel, Count Schomberg, and the other gentlemen shouted to them that Master Scultetus awaited them in the chapel, and that he would tell them what they craved to know.

It was a strange scene enough. The lurid glare in the sky lit the world to a horrible false daylight. The mass of terror-stricken burghers swayed and surged in the large courtyard in silence now. Those who were in the front of the crowd jostled each other frantically, as though their only chance of salvation lay hidden in the small chapel. From below in the town came the ringing of bells and the clamour of a fear-ridden multitude; while from the wild animals' cages in the disused moat came the roar of the lions, roused from their sleep to fury and alarm by the unnatural light. And over all was the long-drawn wail of the wind—that wind which rushed beneath a clear and cloudless sky.

In the chapel the Calvinist preacher poured forth a torrent of words. He affirmed the new luminary to be in very truth the rod of Almighty wrath threatening the oppressors of Christ's elect. It was a portent of coming vengeance on the tyrant who trampled on the children of God in Bohemia. An ominous murmur greeted the mention of Bohemia.

"Why should we suffer for the sake of the Bohemians?" cried an aged citizen.

"What has Bohemia to do with us?" muttered others. "We will have no more to do with rebels." The flood of words rose steadily to a hoarse groan of menace; gathering force like an advancing wave, it broke into a fierce roar. "We want peace—our rightful peace—here. We will have nought to do with Bohemia. Down with the instigator of war! Death to the preacher of destruction! Down with Scultetus, who has brought God's vengeance upon us!" The words were drowned in cries and groans; already rough hands were laid upon the pulpit wherein Scultetus stood. Several men clambered up and threatened the preacher with uplifted fists. "Mercy!" cried Scultetus, and raised his arm to ward off the blows.

"Hold!" called a clear voice from the royal gallery. "Hold, my friends! Hearken to me!" Many in the crowd turned.

"Silence! our Prince will speak with us," these said. Those in the foremost ranks of the mob paid no heed; but gradually, after repeated cries of "Silence!" the uproar abated and a measure of quiet was restored.

Prince Friedrich stood in the gallery and faced his people. At sight of him a change took place in the crowd's attitude. Personal love and loyalty, the memories of a lifetime bound the people to their prince. He stood there with his delicate face flushed, his eyes aglow. Even in the livid light which poured in through the chapel windows he looked a splendid and noble prince, well fitted to claim the love of his people. Her Highness Elizabeth stood beside him, her hand resting on his shoulder, and it was as though her touch awakened strength and purpose in his soul. To do him justice, too, he never lacked in courage, and now he did not quail before his angry subjects.

"Hold!" he cried again. "Cowards! Would you lay hands on a defenceless man? If you have ought to complain of, I am here to answer you!" He paused, and a murmur ran through the groups of burghers.

"We want peace, Palsgrave," said one man, stepping forward and speaking up towards the gallery. "God has sent the sign of His wrath to Heidelberg this night! We first saw the trailing moon in the sky after the Bohemian messengers rode through the town to the castle. That is proof that it is God's warning! We will have no more to do with revolt and bloodshed."

"And so you raise revolt here against me? Since when do my people dare to govern me?" asked Friedrich sternly. "What know you of the councils of princes?"

"We want peace and security here in Heidelberg," the spokesman answered. "We have given gold to yonder preacher for the Bohemians. We will give no more! Rebellion is sinful!"

"Would you hang back, you, men of the Reformed

Faith, when I call on you in the name of God? Bohemia and the Faith will be crushed by Romish tyranny if we do not aid! Think you that the oppressor's sword will be sheathed in Bohemian blood? Nay! it will be turned upon you—upon our land! Trust me, my Heidelbergers, I will guard your peace, but I will never forsake the cause of our oppressed brethren in Bohemia!" cried the Palsgrave. The burghers whispered together. Another citizen, a substantial, soberly clad personage, stepped forward and addressed the prince.

"We love you well, Palsgrave Friedrich, you and your dear lady; but we love our homes and our safety first. God's menace hath rushed into the sky, and we dare not disobey. We adjure you to turn away from the battle-makers, we implore you to shelter us from warfare!" he said gravely. Prince Friedrich faltered, the exaltation faded from his face, and for a moment he bowed his head. Then Elizabeth Stuart's touch came on his shoulder again, and he turned to her. There was a dawning scorn in her eyes as she saw him waver, and like a spurred horse he returned to the charge.

"What!" he cried vehemently, "fear you to fight for your Faith? Would you tamely submit to Romish idolatry? And what fear you? You, who are tutored men, trusted citizens, you tremble before a new star!—you, who would laugh at your own children did they fear the dark, you lose your wits in terror before a heavenly light! Ah! you might be craven idolaters, Popish peasants, believing fond tales!" The Calvinistic burghers fell silent. They were abashed by his scornful words.

"He speaks truth," some muttered. Now Scultetus lifted his voice in loud and fervent prayer. Turning to the sullen mob, he exhorted them in grave words to courage and good sense; and, as he spoke, the habit of belief in their pastor returned to the burghers, and they grew calm.

"Go in peace," Scultetus ended solemnly, "go, believing that God hath not sent this new light as a menace to you, His children, but as an earnest of His goodwill. And shall it not be as with Joshua of old when the Lord bid the sun

to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, while the Amorites were destroyed by God's warriors? For verily, as the Lord fought for Israel, so He will fight for His children now. And He hath sent a new sun to guide us, and yet you are afraid! Go in peace, and believe this thing unto which I have testified, for I know that the Lord fighteth for Israel."

Slowly the mob filed out of the chapel. Like chidden children they took their way homewards, and speaking in hushed voices they repeated the preacher's words.

Silence fell over Heidelberg; the ringing of bells and the hurried tramp of feet ceased, and safe in their gabled dwellings the burghers were at rest; while without the wild wind moaned, and over city and castle, over hill and vale, was shed the wan light of the great comet.

CHAPTER VIII

DEPARTURE

"O! Weh! Die Pfalz ziehet gen Böheim!"

DURING three months the comet glowered over Heidelberg. Gradually the fear of the unknown wore off, and the citizens, safe in their comfortable dwellings, forgot that outside their curtained casements the lurid glare lit the hours of night to an eerie false daylight. Those who were abroad after set of sun gazed up at the trailing monster without fear, believing it to be, as Master Scultetus had affirmed, a heavenly beacon to lighten the godly.

In December her Highness Elizabeth had given birth to her third child, her eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and once more there were rejoicings and wassail at Heidelberg. From Bohemia came but little news; the rigours of winter had put an end to active hostilities, and though Mansfeld, Thurn, Hohenlohe, and Schlick, with the insurgent forces, still confronted Bucquoi and the Imperialists, their real foes were famine and disease, for in the icebound land both armies were perforce inactive.

All Europe talked of Friedrich as a probable king of Bohemia, and the Princes of the Union in lengthy despatches discussed the matter, and gave advice, sometimes for, sometimes against, the crown's acceptance should it be offered. But none knew that the Bohemians had actually proffered the throne to Prince Friedrich; none knew that he had vowed to be the Bohemians' king and the champion of Protestantism.

Meanwhile Prince Friedrich waited. His envoy, Count Dohna, wrote out of England that King James would give no definite answer. His Majesty was occupied in weighing the question as to whether the Bohemians had the right to

elect a king; when he had settled that point he would decide as to the right of an Electoral Prince of the Empire to accept a foreign crown; when he had decided this he would deliberate as to if he approved of his son-in-law taking so momentous a step.

Towards the end of January the comet disappeared as suddenly as it had come. It had foretold nothing, since nothing had occurred; so they said in Heidelberg. Then in March came the news that her Highness's mother, Anne of Denmark, was dead, and popular rumour proclaimed the comet to have foretold the queen's death. Elizabeth Stuart wept the loss of her vain, foolish, kindly mother. The mighty hand of Death smoothed away the remembrance of Danish Anne's petulance, and of her unwise speeches which had so often disturbed the peace of Whitehall. The Court of Heidelberg donned the garments of woe, and her Highness, according to the German mode, retired to her own apartments, and lived mewed up like a nun to prove to the indifferent that she mourned her mother.

"A mark of respect, dear heart; and it is our custom here," said Friedrich pompously.

"Part of the world's nonsense," her Highness answered wearily; "I would I could mourn my mother in my own way."

"The world would think you lacked in love to your mother," he said. And he was not wrong, for all the world and even grave historians have recounted in horrified words how King James only wore black for a few days and thus could not have greatly cared for his queen.

So Elizabeth was cloistered in her own apartments, and added dulness and inaction to the sadness of her heart. Then came the news that the Emperor Matthias was no more, and Europe woke to the fact that a crisis was imminent. After the secret negotiations which had been afoot for months anent the conditions of Friedrich's acceptance of the Bohemian crown, it was mighty awkward for him to be called upon to elect as emperor the very man whom he was scheming to have deposed as king of Bohemia; for directly Matthias had breathed his last, Ferdinand of Styria, the crowned king of Bohemia, laid

claim to the empire, and the Electors were notified that the election would take place at Frankfurt in August.

The spring brought good news from Bohemia. Silesia, Moravia, and Lusatia were sending troops to join the insurgents. Thus all the provinces north of the Danube were ranged against the House of Hapsburg. In June tidings came that Thurn, at the head of ten thousand men, beleagured Vienna. On the other hand it was known that from Flanders, Lorraine, and the Spanish Netherlands reinforcements were hastening to Ferdinand of Styria's aid; and that Philip III. of Spain had despatched troops which, along with Milanese and Neapolitan forces, were marching through the Tyrol into Austria.

Towards the middle of June came the unwelcome intelligence of Mansfeld's crushing defeat by Bucquoi at Zablat; of Thurn's consequent recall to Bohemia; and of the mutinous spirit in the Bohemian army. The dishonesty of the Bohemian generals, and, indeed, of all the officers, had raised a revolt among the men-at-arms. The Council at Prague voted inadequate sums for the troops' maintenance, but even these monies found their way chiefly into the paymasters' pockets, and the troopers were in rags and near starved. A starving, unpaid, mutinous army is a cruel guest to any country, and bitter was the lament of both townsfolk and peasants who were robbed and their homesteads pillaged by the desperate, famine-stricken soldiery.

When this heavy news was brought to Heidelberg, Friedrich and his councillors were filled with consternation and dismay, but their gloom was lessened by a despatch which stated that Bethlem Gabor, Prince of Transylvania, had at length openly espoused the Protestant cause, and was sending a large force to join the insurgent army. The same messenger brought information of the action of the dilatory Prague councillors, who had at length voted the much-needed supplies for the army.

When the appointed time of the Imperial election drew near, John George of Saxony paid Heidelberg a visit. He announced loudly that he intended to vote for Ferdinand

of Styria at Frankfurt, and strongly advised Prince Friedrich to do likewise. As he received evasive answers in the council chamber, he made another attack when her Highness was present at the banquet.

"God knows, Palsgrave," he burst out as he set down a beaker of wine which he had drained to the dregs; "God knows! you might indeed be thinking of taking the Bohemian crown! Eh! what?"

"Nay, nay—I am not yet decided," answered Friedrich, who could not lie easily.

"Decided?" roared his bucolic Highness of Saxony; "it cannot be a hard question! You are asked to make a fool of yourself, and you say: 'Many thanks, no!' that is all! Come to Frankfurt with me to-morrow and vote for friend Ferdinand, and put all silly notions from thine head like a wise lad!" Prince Friedrich flushed angrily. It was insufferable to him that nearly all the Princes of the Union spoke to him and treated him like a boy.

"I have sent my envoy, Count Solms, to Frankfurt," he answered sullenly; "I shall not go myself."

"You must go!" returned the Saxon roughly. "You forget that by inheritance you are the first Elector. You cannot shirk duty thus."

"I do not shirk duty, your Highness," said Friedrich, "my envoy has my instructions." Elizabeth interposed with a query as to if the wine were to John George's liking, and the dangerous topic was avoided. His Highness of Saxony went to bed happy and drunk, and the next morning rode away to Frankfurt.

Solms had a hard task, for the Electors were unanimous in their choice of Ferdinand of Styria, who promised freedom of worship to the Protestants; and Solms, furnished with insufficient instructions, also fearing to precipitate affairs if he refused the Palatine's vote, was obliged to acquiesce. So Ferdinand was elected Emperor in due form, and with the vote of Prince Friedrich's accredited envoy.

Solms rode to Heidelberg with the news, which was received with consternation by Friedrich, with fury by old Anhalt, and with fear by Master Scultetus. Three

days afterwards a deputation arrived from Prague telling how, on the same day as the election in Frankfurt, the Bohemian states had solemnly deposed Ferdinand and proclaimed Prince Friedrich King of Bohemia.

And now for the first time, in the leaders of this Bohemian deputation, the Lady Elizabeth was confronted with specimens of her future subjects. Count Thurn was a handsome man of polished manners, familiar with courtly ways, and he spoke both French and German, having been educated in Vienna; but Count Schlick was only master of a few words of German, and he had all the hostility of manner which gives the Czech a bad name; an hostility which is, in truth, only pride and shyness, and which a soft word or a smile can convert into an impulsive and grateful tenderness. Prince Friedrich, thoroughly German, stiff and formal at the wrong moment, was helpless before this class of being; but Elizabeth, spontaneous and warm-hearted, always forgetting formality, immediately won the old man's heart. He bent the knee before her, and she gave him both her strong, white hands.

"Tell him," she said to Thurn, "that those who give a crown do not kneel. Rather should we kneel to those who make us rulers of so brave a country as Bohemia." Count Thurn translated her words.

"Oppression and sadness have made us all poets in Bohemia, and a poet must ever kneel at the feet of beauty and purity," said old Schlick.

"Tell him that I pray God we may give happiness to the Bohemians, but they must remain poets in spite of joy," she said to Thurn when he had translated Schlick's words. So the Bohemians departed, and took a very rhapsody to their country, as to how fair and sweet a lady would be their queen. And their king? Just what they needed, so they affirmed: a handsome, courteous youth who would be easily guided. In fact they wanted a figurehead, a stick to hang a crown on. They did not seek a man to govern them, for that they opined they could do well enough for themselves; but they wanted a name to conjure with, and they deemed that Friedrich Prince Palatine and his

fair Pearl of Loveliness would be a most suitable name king and queen.

For two hundred years there had existed in Bohemia a traditional love of England. Already early in the fifteenth century the well-beloved Bohemian patriot and reformer, Master John Hus, had spoken of "blessed England." Hus disclaimed the heretical opinions of Wycliffe; still the English reformer's pure life and magnificent denunciation of the immorality of the priesthood had inspired Hus with deep sympathy and had led him to study Wycliffe's works, a study wherefore Hus paid a heavy enough price. Later in Bohemia's troublous history the oppressed Protestants had looked with yearning eyes to England, where their Faith reigned omnipotent. And thus the English Princess, Elizabeth Stuart, seemed to the Bohemians to be the queen chosen of God for them, and the thought of her banished any reluctance which they felt to elect a German prince for their king; for the hatred of the Germans still smouldered in every Bohemian breast, a hatred fully justified by the Bohemian history of three hundred years.

The Heidelbergers saw the prospective elevation of their prince to a throne with mingled feelings. It was an honour, and they were proud for their well-beloved rulers, and yet they dreaded the loss of a Court in Heidelberg. As the days wore on this feeling deepened, and general depression and anxiety reigned in the city, whereas at the castle all was joy and elation, and a grand festival was ordered for the night before their new Majesties' departure. The morning brought the Electress-Dowager to Heidelberg. For many weeks she had written letters of warning to her son, and now she had arrived, a Cassandra presaging woe. She summoned Friedrich and Elizabeth to her chamber, and after dismissing her attendants, she asked sternly if their Highnesses' departure for Bohemia was indeed fixed for the morrow.

"But, madame, you have been informed of the matter from the outset," cried Friedrich impatiently.

"I have ever counselled you to reject the crown, and

now I lay a mother's commands upon you to do so ere it is too late," she returned.

"In all respect, madame, I cannot content you in this matter," he said, "and methinks a mother's commands can only be laid on an unripe youth."

"You forget, madame mère, that Friedrich is a grown man!" cried her Highness.

"And you forget, madame ma fille, that in Germany we are so unmodish as to keep parental respect, aye, and authority, all the days of our life," the old Electress retorted sharply.

"It is an absurd tyranny, madame; the tyranny of old age over youth breeds ugly thoughts! We must be free to follow our destiny once we are grown men and women," said Elizabeth hotly.

"To your undoing, madame?" queried Juliane in a grim tone.

She spoke long and gravely of the risks attendant upon grasping a crown, of the jealousy which each Protestant prince would harbour secretly against a member of the Union who should rise to regal honours, of the instability of the Bohemians, of the awe-inspiring power of Austria. She warned Friedrich that in case of failure as Bohemian king he would lose his Electorate and even his hereditary Palatinate lands. From warning and exhortation Juliane passed to supplication, but, as Friedrich told her, it was too late.

"How can I go back from my written and spoken word, madame ma mère?" he urged.

"You will forfeit all for the sake of a short span of kingship," the old Electress said in a sad voice.

"Courage, madame," cried her Highness gaily. "Believe me, I had liefer eat sauerkraut with a king than fare sumptuously with a Palsgrave!"

"Madame ma fille, that is an ugly saying," Juliane answered angrily.

"Ah! dear madame, I do not mean it in such dire earnest! But I do mean that we dare not waver now—dare not for our honour's sake," said Elizabeth gravely.

"We must follow destiny be it good or evil; but a brave heart is a mighty alchemist, that I can warrant."

It was a dismal day. The wind drove the rain into a vast dim curtain over the valley, hiding the distant plain and blurring the outline of the Heiligenberg. Towards evening the storm relented, and a pale gleam of sunshine came through the clouds.

In the banqueting hall the King Elect sat at dinner with his guests. All the nobles of the Palatinate were assembled at this farewell feast, and their ladies would repair later to the Hall of Mirrors to bid adieu and God-speed to the Pfalzgräfin Elizabeth. It would not be a mournful farewell, for it was known that their new Majesties fully intended to spend a portion of each year in their castle of Heidelberg; and further, that both the King and the Queen had issued a cordial invitation to the noble youths and maidens of the Palatinate to grace the Court at Prague. So there was merriment in the banqueting hall, and in the Hall of Mirrors there was to be a grand ball.

Elizabeth and her Highness Juliane did not attend the banquet, they would only appear at the ball. There were many preparations for the journey on the morrow. "Tell your guests that your goodwife is busy making her bundle to carry with her into Bohemia," Elizabeth had said gaily.

There was one sad little face in Heidelberg Castle that day, little Karl Ludwig's. For Karlutz, as his father called him, was deemed too young to be taken to Prague, and he and his baby sister Elizabeth were to be left at Frankenthal in the care of the Electress Juliane. Prince Henry Friedrich, having reached the mature age of five years, was to accompany his parents, and he was wild with joy at the prospect of a journey.

Elizabeth sat in her withdrawing room, little Karlutz leaned against her knee, while the tiny Princess Elizabeth lay sleeping in an oaken cradle at her side. Prince Henry was rushing about playing at stag-hunting. Elizabeth Stuart's eyes rested on him fondly; this, her first-born, was the child of her heart.

The boy paused in his noisy game.

"I'm going to Prague, and you'll stay here alone, brother," he said proudly, giving little Karlutz a push. The child raised a whimpering cry. He was old enough to understand that every one was going away somewhere and he was to be left behind.

"Poor sweeting," said Elizabeth softly to the crying child —"poor forsaken sweeting." She lifted Karlutz to her knee. Now it seemed to her that she could not leave her children.

"I'm going to Prague to be a king and shoot stags!" announced Prince Henry, "and Karlutz will stay here and be eaten by wolves!" he added. At this the little fellow's whimpering rose to a yell, for though he was far too young to understand, yet he felt that something was going to happen, and his mother's pitying tone told him it was something terrible. Baby Elizabeth awoke screaming.

"What bad bairns!" cried Elizabeth Stuart. "As Mistress Margaret Hay my nurse used to say to me: 'Ye are a bad bairn and good for nothing.'" She rose and summoned her ladies from the antechamber.

"Take these noisy ones," she commanded, "I shall go into the plaisance with Henry for a while till it is time to dress for the ball." She passed down the shallow-stepped stairway and out on to the terrace near the Dicke Thurm. For a moment she gazed over the parapet across the town roofs to the peaceful valley. The sun was setting in a fiery ball, and already the mist rose thickly from the drenched fields beyond the city. Elizabeth drew Prince Henry's little cloak more closely round him.

"Come, my Hal," she said, "we will go and say farewell to the gardens and the orchard."

She pushed open the postern which led to her own garden. Autumn's rude touch had weighed heavy on the flowers, and they lay blackened and beaten to the wet earth by the fierce rain. Summer was gone and the glory of the world seemed forgotten. Elizabeth Stuart felt a sense of dreariness and foreboding creep over her. Somehow she wished that she could have bidden farewell to her beloved garden when the flowers were in their splendour of spring

or summer. She walked down the pathway to the gate which Friedrich had caused to be built for her in a single night. She told Hal the story.

"Did my father build it with his own hands?" the little fellow asked.

"Nay, he caused others to build it," she answered, laughing.

"I would have built it for you myself, mother," he said proudly. "It is nothing to make other people build—I would build for myself!"

How like Hal was to his dead namesake, her dear brother Henry, she thought; the same confident earnestness, the same eager spirit, the wish to work honestly. And this boy would one day be King of Bohemia—this boy might fulfil the promise of true kingship by right of noble purpose, which Death had wrested from that other Hal. She shuddered—perchance Death would ravish this Hal from her too before there was time for the fulfilment of so fair a promise? What had come to her? Why did such drear sentiments assail her, she asked herself impatiently? She laid her hand upon the stonework of the archway, and promised herself that next year, when the world was full of summer again, and kingship assured, she would return to this archway and lay her hand here once more.

"Come, Hal," she called. She took her way round the Dicke Thurm and down the terraced gardens to the rosery. Silently she bid farewell to the rose trees.

"You see, Hal, we must say adieu to our dear garden," she said, "only adieu till next year. When the roses bloom again we will come home out of Bohemia to pluck the flowers."

She wandered on through the rosery and beside the flowering parterres, past the orangery and the water gardens, where Neptune, surrounded by mermaids, poured from trident and uplifted shells cascades of clear water, and dolphins spouted streams from their gaping mouths into the stone tanks. She came to her orchard, which stretched down in a gentle slope towards the river Neckar. Prince Hal ran on before her, and she followed at a leisurely

pace, for her thoughts were busy with the future. Of a sudden the little fellow gave a cry.

"Look, mother!" he called. "Look! the ugly creatures!" He fled back to his mother.

"Mother—mother! they are coming up the hill!" he said, near sobbing with terror.

"Nay, Hal! What is it?" she said soothingly. "Was it a frog or a slug? Dear heart, you must not be afraid of any animal. Ah!——" She finished with an exclamation of surprise, for from out the edge of the long grass there peered at her a strange, horrid little head, and with a jerking movement an animal came towards her. She stood rooted to the spot, for it seemed as if the whole of the orchard slope had become alive with uncouth, black, sleek forms advancing steadily.

The light of the short autumn day was failing, and a white mist rose from the low ground wherefrom the creatures came.

"Hush, Hal," she said tremulously, "they are only the Neckar newts, harmless little animals." But the boy clung to her, and clambered up into her arms.

"Mother—mother! they are going to run over me with their cold, clammy feet. Oh! oh!" he wailed. She held him fast, though his weight was much for her.

"They cannot touch you, dearling," she whispered, but she felt that she too was trembling; she felt that if one of those uncouth, slimy creatures were to touch her—to walk over her foot—she must scream aloud.

The newts advanced from out the long grass down the slope as in an army. She could see the vivid orange stripe on each swiftly turning flat head; she could see their craning necks, their plump, brown bodies, and their webbed feet. A sense of physical sickness seized her. The animals had reached the pathway where she stood; some had jerked past her and were trailing up the bank behind her—but there seemed no end of them. They were all around her. . . .

"Ah!" she cried aloud. One of the creatures had touched her foot. Should she fly? She made a step

forward, and again her shoe touched a plump, sleek, slimy body. She closed her eyes. Courage! They were only river animals. But an army of them here in her orchard?

"Mother—oh! you are letting me fall," the child wailed. Her pride came to her rescue; she would not behave like a timorous waiting-maid. Fighting back that awful feeling of sickened disgust which rose in her throat, she strained the little fellow to her breast and stood like some figure of defiance and despair, but with closed eyes and beating heart. It seemed to her as if the creatures' webbed feet touched her constantly, as if their fat, dank bodies pressed around her. She fancied that a fetid, unwholesome smell filled her nostrils.

At length she opened her eyes. The animals were gone; and the melancholy tranquillity of the orchard seemed to rebuke her for her fear. Hal still clung round her neck, and now she felt the weight of the well-grown five-year-old boy to be intolerable. She tried to set him down, but he clutched wildly at her, crying:

"They will walk over me. Mother—mother! keep me safe!"

"They are gone, Hal," she said, "you need not fear them now." It seemed to her that she had dreamed—those strange intruders in the well-known peaceful orchard could have been but figments of her fancy. She stooped and set Hal on his feet.

"Be a cavalier, Hal of mine," she said. "Do not act like a silly maiden." She noticed that the pathway was traced with dozens of imprints where the webbed feet had squelched into the soft red mud, and she saw that the creature which had passed over her foot had left a smudge of whitish slime on her shoe. Once more disgust seized her, and she turned sick and faint.

"Come, Hal," she said, and gripping the little fellow's hand firmly in her own she hurried away. She met a gardener in the rosery.

"Have you ever seen hundreds of Neckar newts in the orchard?" she asked.

"I've seen a few of the nasty efts sometimes, your

Highness," said the man. "We say in the country here that when they march in an army they go to a funeral, or to bid farewell to a wanderer who will never return to this land; but I've never seen them marching, your Highness." He looked at Elizabeth inquisitively.

"They are harmless animals enough," she returned carelessly; but a sense of desolation and despair crept over her.

"Good night!" she said to the man kindly.

"Good night, and God bring your Highness safe back to us out of Bohemia," the gardener answered deferentially.

"God grant it!" she said under her breath as she passed on towards the castle.

. . . . . .

On the morning of their Majesties' departure leaden clouds lowered over the Heiligenberg as if in sullen anger, and the valley towards Ladenburg was shut out by a dense wall of mist. In the city the rain beat fiercely on the red roofs and splashed unceasingly over the rough, uneven cobblestones of the narrow streets. Towards eight of the clock the bells of the Heilig-Geist Kirche rang out, and the citizens gathered quickly on the market-place near the church.

It was a black-robed crowd, for the burghers had donned their sombre winter mantles to shield them from the downpour, and in the chill, grey light of the morning it seemed to be a funeral company gathered there. The dark forms issued from the narrow streets and joined their fellow-citizens in the Marktplatz, where the men spoke together in hushed voices, and the women wept. Truly, there was sorrow in Heidelberg that day.

The crowd streamed into the church. In the lofty, pillared naves the darkness was almost of night. No light was upon the bare altar, before which stood the long, plain table where the Calvinists partook gloomily of the feast of remembrance, the Lord's Supper. On the pulpit two lights flickered. For some time the black-gowned congregation stood waiting, and it seemed as though they were expecting the advent of some funeral train, as if

each moment the awesome, heavy, careful tread of coffin-bearers must break the silence. Overhead the bell still rang, and its tolling seemed to be a knell for the departed.

With a swift step a young man entered the church, a slender youth with large, melancholy dark eyes, and a pointed beard. On the ruff of fine white linen his brown hair fell in glossy ringlets, one of which was plaited into a pearl earring which fell from one ear only. His cloak, tunic, and trunk hose were of black velvet, and as he moved the cloak fell back, showing upon his breast a flashing jewel hanging on a broad blue ribbon from beneath the ruff. He was followed by some half-dozen attendants soberly clad like himself. These formed a group at the base of the nave, while Friedrich the Palsgrave passed on and took his place in a chair before the pulpit. From the sacristy, whence in olden times had come forth priests in the splendour of rich vestments, now came a small, grave-faced man in black raiment, who took his place in the pulpit. It was Master Scultetus, and he spoke his text in a harsh voice: "Behold My servant whom I uphold; Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Solemnly the preacher recounted the choosing of Friedrich of the Palatinate by the Bohemians, how these Lutherans had been led by the hand of God to elect a king of the pure faith of Calvin. He spoke of the splendour of Friedrich's mission, yet he warned the congregation that as the knights of old had perished in the crusades against the infidels, so might the champion of Protestantism be called upon to lay down his life in this crusade against idolatry and oppression.

"Bid him farewell—your Palsgrave," the preacher cried, "for verily, ye may see him no more! And yet such is the justice of God that ye may look forward confidently to a glad greeting of your prince. For God shall lead him back to you in peace after the hosts of the Philistines and their Hapsburg Goliath have fallen before the sling of this new David." Triumphantly the preacher's voice

echoed through the vaulted aisles of the Heilig-Geist church, and yet that verbiage of biblical language so dear to the hearts of the Calvinists failed for once to stir the congregation. They were men of peace after all, and though they loved to thunder forth texts and to garnish their talk with Old Testament allusions, it was quite another thing to see their well-beloved Palsgrave go forth to battle with the overwhelming forces of Hapsburg, and to lose the remunerative presence of a permanent Court at Heidelberg. Friedrich sat motionless, his melancholy eyes fixed and thoughtful, his cheeks pale with emotion ; a poor, weak, willing David, all unfit to contend with any Goliath !

At length the preacher ceased speaking, and for a moment the sound of the raindrops beating against the windows usurped the place of the voice of prayer. In spite of Master Scultetus's vehemence the dismal baldness of the Calvinistic form of worship was flat and uninspiring. How different had an organ pealed, had a thousand tapers lit the ancient church to beauty, had vestments and glowing altar-cloths given warmth and colour to the grey stone of that Gothic pile ! If, instead of the heavy, rank odour of wet garments, the fragrance of incense had filled the air ! Verily, the " harlot of Rome " knew how to thrill souls, knew it better than that stern woman of unalluring virtue, the Calvinistic matron.

Carefully Scultetus blew out the two candles on the pulpit and descended the steps into the church. His tread creaked discordantly as he hurried into the sacristy. The King Elect rose and passed down the central nave to the porch.

" Farewell, my friends ! " he said huskily to those who had followed him from the church. " Farewell ! God grant you prosperity. Farewell ! Farewell ! " he repeated, as they crowded round him.

A venerable burgher, the aged Master-Builder Jordan, broke out in loud weeping.

" Palsgrave, Palsgrave ! do not leave us," he sobbed. " 'Tis a long road to Bohemia, and we shall weary without you and your dear lady."

As if the old man's words had unlocked a floodgate of speech, cries and supplications burst forth. The citizens pressed round the King Elect, crying out: "Stay with us, your Highness! Oh! go not to Bohemia. Rule us in peace and plenty. Do not tempt the wrath of God by travellings. Alas! alas! if you go we shall never see you more. Never more! Alas! never more!"

Friedrich stood irresolute. Their emotion caught him, and he wept with them. "I will return to you—I go but for a little time," he stammered. Now the crowd which had stood beyond the church doors swept in. Women threw themselves upon their knees at his feet. "Do not leave us!" they wailed. "Stay with us or we are lost! If you go we shall never see you more!"

A madness seemed to have seized the orderly Heidelbergers, a very frenzy of grief and apprehension. They clutched his mantle, they kissed its hem. A weeping woman flung her arms around his knees, crying: "Alas! alas! Prince, you go to destruction!" Friedrich raised her.

"I go to do my duty," he said gently.

"That duty is a vain thing which leads a prince to forsake his people!" a voice called in the crowd. At this moment Scultetus, Camerarius the State secretary, Count Schomberg, and the other gentlemen shouldered their way through the crowd to the King's side. They tore his cloak from out the people's grasp, and hurried him away across the market-place. But the sound of the people's wailing followed him as he passed up the steep hill to the castle.

Here all was hurry, and it was a relief to Friedrich to be in the commonplace of life. It seemed to him that he had escaped from some irksome dream, as if that scene in the Heilig-Geist Kirche had been unreal, some doleful history that had been told to him. He welcomed the signs of approaching travel which he saw in the courtyard. Huge wooden cases stood about, and into these the serving-men were piling up velvet bed-hangings and silken coverlets, or packages of linen. There a stout carpenter was fitting bars around her Highness's

carven chairs, half-a-dozen henchmen staggered across the yard bearing chests of silver, and others laboured beneath loads of priceless tapestries. It was all so comfortably familiar to the King! How often had he seen such preparations for travel! Without all this baggage no prince, or even wealthy traveller, could journey, for who could trust to the sorry accommodation of roadside hostelries? So beds and chairs, tapestries, linen, silver, and even the kitchen utensils were carried in waggons, or on sumpter-horses behind the coaches of the great.

On this occasion much was to be conveyed to Prague. Although it was known that the Hradcány Palace contained the pictures and statues, ivories and carvings which Rudolf, the Emperor-antiquary, had treasured there, who could say if her new Majesty of Bohemia would find those luxuries of life which were necessary to her? Already several well-guarded companies of sumptermen with laden horses had been despatched into Bohemia; but the country was full of skirmishing bands from Bucquoi's army near Budweis; and worse still, it was whispered, with famished, marauding deserters from the Bohemian forces, and it was feared that the King's baggage would never reach Prague. Though Mansfeld held the town of Pilsen, since his defeat at Zablat he sulked behind the ramparts, and afforded but scant aid to any traveller. And so, for the most part, the King and Queen's baggage was to follow them, well guarded like themselves. Their route lay through Ansbach to Amberg, the last Palatine town before the Bohemian frontier. Here it was designed to make a long halt, for the quaint mediæval city with the mighty walls, the ninety-seven watch-towers, and the ancient gabled castle on the banks of the river Vils, had ever been a favourite abode of her Highness Elizabeth and the Palsgrave.

It was cheering to Friedrich to reflect that he but journeyed at first to well-known Amberg; somehow he felt that he could not have faced his entry into Bohemia with the wailing of his faithful Heidelbergers still ringing in his ears. He hurried through the courtyard to

the English Palace. In the "supper parlour" a repast was set out, and in the embrasure of the latticed window her Highness sat waiting. Around her were her ladies, Amalia Solms and the four English damsels who had journeyed to Heidelberg to learn the duties of maids of honour to the new Queen of Bohemia. There were Mistress Bridget Clovelly and Mistress Joan Stanley, my Lady Phyllis Devereux, who had been Elizabeth Stuart's playmate in the happy days at Combe, and Mistress Alison Hay, cousin to my Lord Viscount Doncaster, newly created Earl of Carlisle, the Ambassador. A right merry company, but decorous and graceful in their merriment, as befitted ladies of such gentle birth. They gathered round the breakfast-table, which, in the English fashion, was decked with snowy napery. Her Highness Elizabeth would have none of the German modes—no polished oaken board or gorgeous velvet coverings; she loved her table to be spread with fair white linen, and would only permit the serving-men to clear away the tablecloth before the fruit was served at dinner or at supper time.

Her Highness Louise Juliane entered, and Elizabeth Stuart and the ladies bent before her in deep courtesies, then the company partook of their morning meal. And a copious refection it was: there were "süpplein" broths of mixed meat and cream, there were pasties and game, "hähnlein" roast (small chickens), and "hähnlein" baked, wine possets strongly spiced, ale and sack, and a vast assortment of cakes and baked sweetmeats.

The merriment soon banished the shadow from the King's brow. He jested with the maids of honour, teased my Lady Phyllis Devereux about the stories her Highness had told of their childish pranks at Combe, rallied Mistress Alison Hay about barbarous Scotland, asked her if she would make her entry into Prague like her cousin my Lord of Carlisle did at Paris, with pearls sewn so loosely on her raiment that they fell off for the populace to gather up.

During this young gaiety Louise Juliane sat silent. She was oppressed by doleful forebodings, and, God knows, the

jangle of unshared merriment, the laughter wherein we do not join, is torture to an aching heart. The repast ended, and King Friedrich called for a goblet of wine.

"Madame ma mère," he cried, rising to his feet, "I would fain pledge you in a cup of sack!" He lifted the silver goblet high, and, half jesting, he cried:

"To our next merry meeting, madame mère!" Then seeing her troubled face he whispered to her in German: "*Mütterlein, sei nit traurig, lieb' Mütterlein!*"

Louise Juliane rose, and she, too, lifted her goblet high. "I pledge you, sweet son—" she said, but the tears choked her and she could not drink.

Elizabeth Stuart rose hastily. "We must not tarry longer!" she cried. "It is time we were on the road if we would sleep in Ansbach this night."

Her ladies brought her brown velvet travelling mantle and the high-crowned felt hat with the long feather. After she had donned these, she stood silent, gazing round the supper parlour. A wave of sadness swept over her. She had passed so many peaceful hours here with Friedrich, Christel, and her ladies, and she had learned to love the oak-panelled room. Ah, how fanciful she was growing! She would see this homely parlour a thousand times again? Was she not returning to Heidelberg next year? Yes, after the formal banquets, after the business of regal pomp at Prague, she would come home to Heidelberg and rest before she resumed the splendour of a queen.

"Farewell, madame mère," she said gaily. "Ah, be not so sad, madame! I am, as usual, of my wild humour to be merry, and you must not grieve; we shall be here again before to-morrow year has waned!" She embraced Louise Juliane fondly, and, calling her ladies, took her way down the winding stair laughing and talking. In the ante-hall she found Karlutz, and the baby Elizabeth asleep in her nurse's arms.

"See, ma mère," she called to Juliane, "I leave you two brave little consolers who, I warrant, will plague you mightily. But, madame, I shall rob you of these naughty

ones right swiftly. I must have them in Prague to show the Bohemians what goodly bairns their King hath."

She bent and kissed Karlutz. "Be a brave little cavalier," she whispered. Gently she laid her hand on the sleeping baby. "I will not waken her, sweet mite," she said, and passed out of the stately portal to the courtyard where the coach stood, with Prince Hal already ensconced in the cushioned seat. Old Curly, the spaniel, had followed her Highness, and now he tried to jump into the coach.

"Not this time, my Curly, no! But next year I will fetch you away too," she said. The faithful dog looked at her with despairing, questioning eyes.

"Poor Curly!" she said, and bent to stroke him. "No, good friend, I cannot take you." A tear stole down her Highness's cheek, the others understood, but this faithful friend, she thought, only knew that he was forsaken. She caught up her monkey—a descendant and namesake of the first Jacko—and with the little brown creature in her arms, she entered the coach.

"Why may not Curly come too?" asked Prince Hal indignantly.

"He is so old and frail, dearling, he will be safest here," she said.

"Poor Curly, we shall see him never more," the little boy said, and fell to weeping bitterly.

"Next year, Hal, next year," she answered, but her heart misgave her. Why did every one say "Nevermore?" What foolishness! To-morrow year, or perhaps with the third bloom of the roses, she would be back in Heidelberg.

The heavy coaches moved on. The King Elect and his suite rode beside Elizabeth Stuart's carosse, despite the beating rain. Turning in his saddle, Friedrich called merrily: "Farewell till next year!"

But for answer Louise Juliane threw up her arms with a despairing cry: "Ah, woe to me! There rideth the Palatine to doom!"

CHAPTER IX

HUMILIATION

"The dreamy air is full and overflows
With tender memories of the summertide."

—LONGFELLOW.

AFTER the tedious two days of travel through the rain-drenched country from Heidelberg, Elizabeth Stuart was right happy to rest at Amberg. She loved the quiet old city, which lay as though cloistered by the grim mediæval walls, guarded by ninety-seven watch-towers. The castle was small and homely compared with the splendour of Heidelberg, but there was something infinitely peaceful in that old-world garden, which sloped down to the river and the ancient bridge, whose two rounded arches, with their reflection on the still surface of the water, formed the "town spectacles," as the citizens said. It was a prosperous city, for the country round was rich in iron; and the townsfolk, albeit of simple, unpretentious habits, were industrious, orderly, and contented. Perhaps during these quiet days at Amberg it was the last time in her life that Elizabeth Stuart felt that sense of guarded peace, of prosperous security.

Early one morning she sallied forth to the market-place with Amalia Solms and Prince Hal. It was her whim to play at the burgher's wife for once. She had discarded her fardingale and had donned a black velvet cloak and a tall, black felt hat with a sweeping plume, and thus attired she wandered down the narrow streets. A chill morning haze still veiled the city after the many days of rain, but a pale gleam of sun touched the red roofs and lit the streets to a dewy, glistening beauty. In the market-place, before the Rathaus, the peasants gathered round their stalls, which were heaped up with a wealth of vegetables,

with fresh, brown-shelled eggs, and creamy yellow butter. The merchants' wives, followed by serving-wenches, basket on arm, moved about choosing their daily provisions. The worthy matrons wore their Amberg costume: neat buckled shoes, full skirts, bodices of plain dark cloth, with folded cross-overs of dainty white muslin, and the finely-woven, gilt filet caps, accurate copies of those their grandmothers and great-gran'dams had worn. For the world's fancies and fashions changed but slowly in those days, and in peaceful Amberg love and life passed on to death softly and at leisure, leaving the picture of the city's life unaltered, save that other faces looked out from the little gilded caps; other hearts beat beneath the goffered muslin cross-overs. Monotony perchance; yet to the wanderer there is sweetness in one draught of that cup of peace which monotony brews. True, for the daily drink this sweetness is cloying, but to the wanderer it is delicious, in some pause of journeying, to quaff this slow-brewed draught. And to Elizabeth Stuart it seemed very sweet and wholesome. She wandered on among the market-booths, smiling at the surprise and admiration which she read on the people's faces, for they soon recognised her, and the whisper went round the market-place that the Pfalzgräfin was among them.

There clattered across the cobble-stoned square a train of gallants. Elizabeth Stuart drew back into the shelter of the Rathaus portal. Her dream of leisured, commonplace life was shattered by the sight of the riders, for among them she recognised Count Christopher Dohna, Friedrich's envoy to England, and she saw that his face was overshadowed with anxiety. She had long dreaded his return; for, knowing her father's character, she had always feared that James's habitual procrastination was a cloak for his wily, ungenerous policy, and that in the end he would refuse his aid to the Protestant Princes.

With a heavy heart she retraced her steps to the castle. It was her destiny, she told herself sadly, that whenever she felt at peace the shadow of State affairs should fall upon her, and yet she chid herself, for she knew that he

who plays on the great stage of life must sacrifice leisure, security, and peace. She smiled when she thought of herself living her life in the guarded monotony of a city like Amberg. No! her place was in the highway of life. Better, she thought, to live each hour in poignant ecstacy of endeavour, of action, even of tragedy, than to be lulled to the sleep of death through a lifetime of drowsy content.

With head erect and proud step she passed through the autumn-ravaged garden to the castle. In the long, low, panelled parlour she found Friedrich, Count Solms, Camerarius the secretary, Master Scultetus, and Baron Christopher Dohna. The King Elect held a letter in his hand; his expression was one of troubled perplexity.

"News out of England, my Lord of Dohna?" asked Elizabeth cheerfully as she entered. "And no good news, as I see by your rueful looks!"

Dohna bent the knee before her. "Your Majesty," he said, "I am the bearer of no tidings, alack! I have no definite answer from your royal father." Elizabeth Stuart laughed gaily.

"Ah! sir, let me tell you your own tidings, for a daughter's heart can hear a parent's words from afar! My father says he must weigh the legal precedents of all history ere he can bid you call me queen! My father commands us to wait, and"—again her eyes grew bright with laughter—"and we have not waited!" Even Friedrich smiled.

"'Tis mighty fine to jest, ma reine," he said, "but King James will never forgive that we have not waited for his answer."

"Never is a long word," she answered lightly, "a word which lovers whisper, and angered parents thunder out. And time has a sponge wherewith he washes out the word! But, sir," she turned to Dohna, "had the despatches anent our acceptance reached England ere you started?"

"Yes, madame," said Dohna, "but his Majesty complains that three days after you had sent despatches begging for his advice, the crown was accepted without waiting for his answer."

"But we had asked him before! Alack! who can wait upon the slow wisdom of a greybeard?" cried the King Elect.

"There is a proverb which I have had to hear from my father often: 'Wisdom and haste did ne'er go hand in hand,'" said Elizabeth, laughing. "But what does my father advise now?" she added.

"That your Majesties should wait until he lays the matter before Parliament. I am commissioned to pray you to wait," said Dohna.

"We will wait in Prague, sir," she answered proudly.

In truth, how could Prince Friedrich have waited longer? Many months ago he had laid a clear statement of the facts before King James, and those events, which had taken place since this document had been drawn up, could but have added to the force of each argument which he had put forward. The Emperor Matthias' death had removed the monarch whom the Bohemians had freely accepted; Ferdinand of Styria's election as king had been forced upon them, and they had deposed him in due form. That Ferdinand had been elected Emperor, even according to Friedrich's own vote, altered nothing in the invalidity of his claim to the Bohemian throne, for Bohemia was a separate and independent kingdom. Thus Friedrich argued, and thus had Dohna argued many times to King James. England was bound to assist her co-religionists in the event of war, bound in honour and by the solemn treaty with the Princes of the Protestant Union; bound, too, by the ardent anti-popish feeling of the English people. Friedrich had asked for James' advice, but, as his father-in-law hesitated to give any answer, he was under no obligation to wait longer. He was not bound to wait for the English King's permission to accept the Bohemian crown! This Camerarius set down in his delicate, scholarly handwriting, and Dohna affirmed it all once more to the King Elect, who needed the comfortable cordial of assurance to keep his resolution warm.

In spite of the disturbing English news the days passed

right merrily in Amberg. Dohna was a polished courtier, distinguished for his elegance and knowledge of courts; and if he brought but scanty political tidings out of England, yet he had much to relate of the doings at Whitehall. How the Court was more gross than ever since Anne of Denmark's death; of how Buckingham ever grew more splendid, and that even if King James's affection for him seemed to wane, yet was Buckingham sure of future power, for Prince Charles lavished on him an enthusiasm of almost brotherly love, Then, too, Dohna had tarried a day in Holland with Maurice of Orange, and he had a dozen histories of the doings at the Hague to recount. Chief among these were the scandalous tales told of Duke Christian of Brunswick, son of Elizabeth, sister to Anne of Denmark, and thus Elizabeth Stuart's close kinsman.

"What is my cousin Duke Christian's appearance?" she asked Dohna. Womanlike she wished an accurate description of this "wicked monster," and, manlike, Dohna could but tell her that Duke Christian "looked well enough, a proper man if his ways were like his looks." For some half-year the Duke had been in Holland studying the science of war under Maurice of Orange, but it seemed as though the science of love and revelry was more to his taste.

"They call him the mad Halberstädter among the people, as I hear, madame," said Dohna, "yet his madness is but the madness of very wild youth."

"Why Halberstädter?" she asked.

"He is the lay bishop or administrator of the see of Halberstadt," Dohna told her.

"A pretty bishop!" she cried. "Nay, I hope I may ne'er set eyes on this fierce, evil cousin of mine. It is the more shame to him that, being nearly a pastor of God, he should do such fearsome deeds of lust. But tell me more of him, my Lord of Dohna," she added.

They were dark histories that she heard: tales of midnight revels, of stormy scenes and nocturnal pranks played on peaceful burghers, and above all, the shattering

of marriage bliss, or dulness, by this reckless devil, the mad Halberstädter. Dohna smiled to himself, for it diverted him hugely to see that even the Pearl of England, the Princess Elizabeth of famed purity, was so eager to hear the stories of a young man's misdeeds.

"But, sir," she cried at length, "the man is a monster of sin!"

"Your majesty, c'est un charmeur de femmes!" Dohna answered with a smile.

"I fear me such men are the devil's emissaries," she said, with a sigh.

There were merry doings at Amberg during those days of their Bohemian Majesties' sojourn: stag hunts in the forests near by, gallants riding through the quiet streets of the city, a stir and a hurry in the market-place, dancing, music, and banqueting in the castle. In after times of bitter trouble the Ambergers looked back to these days as to the most splendid they had ever known.

. . . . . .

On a golden autumn morning the King Elect rode westward from Amberg. It was as though the dying year had remembered her spring rhapsody, and, after many days of tears, Dame Nature smiled once more as if in love with the sun. The woods exhaled a glorious fragrancy of earth and moss, and the doomed leaves, clinging still to the branches, rustled for the last time in the gentle breeze. After the desolate days the whole earth seemed to exult in this sudden return of light and happiness, and Friedrich's soul was filled with elation. Life and youth pulsed in his veins, and he felt himself to be a man with a splendid destiny. There was no cloud on the horizon of his mind. This day he rode to Rothenburg to receive the good wishes of the Princes of the Union, to tell them that he, their brother in Faith, went forth to conquer the accursed oppressor—nay, that he had already conquered since he was a king, and to his standard all the Protestant nations were sending warriors. War there would be none; he was freely elected by a free nation, and the Hapsburger would perforce bow before

the might of so potent a confederation. He pictured Europe as a peaceful Arcady. Gradually the ancient Harlot of Rome would forget her evil wiles and own herself defeated by the fair purity, the sweet reasonableness, of that scatheless maiden, the New Faith! Then, too, the Lutherans would voluntarily renounce their errors, and soon Europe would be as a great valley of peace where all men prayed alike, strove alike, loving brethren in Faith. And all this marvel would be accomplished through the divine mission of Friedrich, King of Bohemia, that Friedrich who would one day become Emperor of a holy Evangelical Empire. He saw himself a knightly king kneeling at the feet of his well-beloved lady, he saw himself reverently crowning her Queen, then Empress. He rode on as in a dream.

Duke Christian of Anhalt and Master Scultetus had not accompanied the King Elect; Friedrich had intimated that he would speak with the Princes of the Union without his usual advisers. He had to do with his peers; he would answer to them alone. He feared old Anhalt's rude speeches, he did not desire quarrels, and he knew that Scultetus also was held in abhorrence by reason of his intolerance of Lutheranism. Thus Friedrich's retinue was composed of a handful of callow youths. Duke Magnus of Wirtemberg rode among them, and through his reverie Friedrich heard the sound of ever-recurrent laughter, for Duke Magnus was a "merry Andrew," never serious for a moment.

"Magnus!" called Friedrich, turning in his saddle, "I pray you exhaust your store of quips to-day, for when we enter Rothenburg I will have no fooling."

"Jog-a-jog on the footpath way
And merrily hent the stile-a;
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a,"

sang Duke Magnus. "But I vow me, cousin, I will be as glum as Master Scultetus himself when we come to Rothenburg! Yet, cousin, the merry monarchs are those the

people love. A king with a smile gains hearts, and hearts are useful friends," he said lightly.

"Nay! I will be no glum sovereign," said Friedrich joyously; "life is too full of love to be doleful."

They cantered on, laughing and talking like happy boys, and indeed what else was Friedrich with his twenty-three summers? They rode through a smiling country, past many peaceful hamlets where the crooked white-washed walls of the peasants' dwellings were decorated by brown wood-beams criss-cross in haphazard, irregular lines; then towards Nürnberg, where the broad fields stretched away to wooded hillocks; and through fragrant forests, where the tall, straight trunks of the slender pine trees formed dim aisles as of some wondrous cathedral of Nature's building.

Leaving Nürnberg, they travelled on until against the sky-line they sighted the pointed towers of Rothenburg. The dusk fell as they rode up the long, steep incline which leads from the plain to the city. Grim and impregnable the town-wall rose in their sight as they came near. At the Röderthurm they drew rein, and, having announced their names and qualities, were admitted through the triple gates to the city. The street lay deserted, save for a dozen grubby children and a few blear-eyed gaffers—old age and weak childhood, forsaken and neglected—while the more responsible members of the community gaped and stared before the houses, where the magnificent Princes of the Union were lodged. Thus the chief actor in the drama passed unnoticed to the house of Master George Nusch, the new burgomaster, who had prayed the champion of Protestantism to honour his poor dwelling-place. The worthy man received the King Elect with every mark of reverence, kneeled at his stirrup, and kissed the hem of his dusty riding-coat.

"Nay, master!" cried Friedrich, raising him, "I would not have you soil your lips with dust."

"Your majesty, I would willingly drink a river of dust and blood could my draught empty the cup of tribulation which hath been held to the lips of those who but

thirsted for the pure water of the Faith," said Nusch solemnly.

"Sir Burgomaster," replied Friedrich, with a touch of youthful grandiloquence, "it shall be my mission on earth to give the living stream of salvation, untainted by blood I pray, to my comrades of the Reformed Faith."

At this moment a billet was handed to Friedrich. He noted that it bore the superscription: "To his Highness the Elector Palatine." It was a brief missive from the Duke of Wirtemberg craving immediate private speech with his friend and kinsman. Friedrich replied courteously, that he would speak with his Highness on the morrow, but that this evening, being greatly weary with travel, he prayed the Duke to hold him excused. For Friedrich desired no premature meetings with the Princes of the Union. He awaited his audience with his compeers on the morrow in the Council Chamber of the Rathaus.

The morning dawned ominous and clouded. Before nine of the clock the Princes of the Union were seen slowly proceeding to the Rathaus. There were his Grace of Wirtemberg, uncle to Duke Magnus; the Dukes of Baden and Neuburg, his Highness of Ansbach, the Duke of Kulmbach, the Elector of Brandenburg, the Landgraf of Hesse, and the venerable representatives of the free towns of the Empire. The Elector of Saxony was there, and many other nobles of high name. Protestantism—Lutheran and Calvinistic—was fully represented, a grave and sober company of statesmen and patrician citizens.

As the church clocks rang out the ninth hour the King Elect of Bohemia took his way from Master Nusch's dwelling in the Schmiedgasse to the Rathaus. A heavy silence brooded over the town, so that the peaceful splashing of the street fountain sounded almost noisy. On the market-place before the Rathaus were groups of peasant women, in their large, black ribbon head-dresses, their ample skirts of sombre cloth, gay embroidered aprons, white stockings, and buckled shoes. The men in their long, full-skirted, blue cloth coats, adorned with many

rows of silver buttons, with black leather breeches to the knee, white stockings, and, like their womenkind, shoes with broad silver buckles. A number of townsfolk were gathered there too—citizens' wives in their little caps of finely gilded fillet-work, in their full skirts of rich cloth, and girdles of silver, wherefrom hung the household keys, and the little leather satchels wherein the Frau Sattlermeister, the Frau Fleischermeister, the Frau Schreinermeister carried their daily household money.

King Friedrich walked swiftly and alone, his noble retinue following on foot a few paces back. In their wake was led the King's chestnut steed, with arched neck and small proud head, a mighty gelding of a Flemish stock, crossed with an Arab breed. This was "Hurry," the king's favourite horse. A feeble cheer went up as Friedrich passed, and high above the manly voices, came the women's shrill trebles calling: "Hail, King Friedrich!" He smiled at them, this brown-eyed youth, to whom women always gave a kindliness. King of so little yet, save of women's friendship—friendship, not love; yet debonnair and very bonny he looked in his rich brown coat—viol-brown as it was called, a colour much favoured by Elizabeth Stuart. He wore riding boots and gilded spurs, a sword clanked at his side, and on his head was a wide, brown felt hat, with a sweeping feather fastened by a jewelled buckle. Half the time the hat was in his hand as he answered to the plaudits of the crowd, answered with a smile. What had Magnus said? "A king who can smile wins hearts, and hearts are right useful in the world's warfare." But no! it could have been no shrewd teaching which inspired Friedrich's smile that day! He was truly uplifted, proud and glad, sure of his destiny, confident of himself. At that moment, surely a man for a queen to love. "Hail, King Friedrich! Champion of the Faith!" He strode up the shallow steps of the Rathaus and beneath the narrow portal, whence the stairway rose like the twisted leaf of some giant stone plant. He paused in surprise, for he was suddenly confronted by the flare of

torches. The Burgomaster, mindful of the darkness of the autumn morning, had posted torch-bearers on the staircase. King Friedrich stepped forward and, bending, peered up through the narrow well of the stairway. He started, for distinct in the light of the topmost torch, he saw the eagle of Empire emblazoned on the ceiling. By some trick of vision this eagle, although in reality quite small, is made to appear large and overpowering, and it had been the master-builder, Leonhard Weidmann's boast, that by his art he had magnified Empire in the sight of all men. And King Friedrich, seeing this, thought that an omen of his own destiny was revealed to him. Already he deemed that the divine right of kings had given him a clearer vision of the things of the future. Yes, the unknown days held an Empire for him he thought—a great reformed Empire. He strode on with head erect and sure tread.

In the ante-hall a group of young esquires, of burghers' sons, and underling clerks, bowed deeply as he passed. An usher lifted a heavy crimson curtain, and Friedrich, King Elect of Bohemia, stood on the threshold of the Council Chamber.

It was dark in the lofty hall, for the windows faced due westward, and thus lay in shadow. Only through the one tall, south window came a cold light, which fell straight on the ancient carven stone judgment-chair, whence, during three hundred years, the judges had spoken when death had been a criminal's doom. It was bitter cold in the vast stone hall. On the long, narrow centre-table four waxen candles shed a pale light on the faces of the assembled members of the Union, who sat at the table, while behind them stood a few clerks and notaries.

The princes rose as Friedrich entered. He bowed to each according to precedency, and they responded courteously, if coldly. For a moment Friedrich stood silently at the head of the Council board. His gaze wandered round the gloomy Council Chamber. Everything was indistinct save the judgment-chair at the end of the hall,

and, showing wan in the candle-light, the faces of those who sat at the table. There was something funereal and ghastly in the silence and in the bearing of those solemn men. The table, with its covering of sombre cloth, looked like a long, black coffin; and the flickering light of those four waxen tapers seemed like the candles round a bier.

Friedrich shivered a little. It was as though the gloom laid a tangible touch on his heart. But his elation was proof against the grim impression, and in an unfaltering voice he invoked the blessing of God upon the deliberations of the Council. Solemnly the princes responded "Amen!" and their voices re-echoed hollow in the stone hall.

Then King Friedrich began the speech which he had rehearsed so often in his mind.

"My Lords of the Evangelical Union," he said, "I come in person to inform you that after due consideration and earnest prayer I have accepted the crown of Bohemia. Of the undoubted right of the Bohemians to elect their King I need not remind you, for the conditions are as familiar to you as to me. The House of Hapsburg has no hereditary rights, for, indeed, the very formula used for several generations in the legal documents: 'King by acceptance of Bohemia,' denotes that, an a nation can accept a king, they are obviously free to reject one who is not to their liking. Further, my Lords, no quibbling legal document, no question of precedent, can stand before the needs of a noble and oppressed country. When cruelty and tyranny have ground a nation to the dust, then is revolt a fair and proper thing. Yet there is a greater need than life, a more urgent call than even sorrow and pain can utter, and that is the salvation of the soul to all eternity. Whosoever wavers before the task of saving his soul at the expense of defying an usurping tyrant, that man is accursed. And the brethren of our Faith in Bohemia must either abjure their religion to embrace the tenets of Antichrist, or they must throw off the yoke of the Romish Hapsburger. This the Bohemians have done bravely and openly, and they have chosen me as their King. My

Lords, I pray you give me your good wishes for the accomplishment of what is my mission here on earth: to rule my new kingdom to the glory of God and the uprooting of the foul tyrant, the servant of the Scarlet Woman of Rome!"

He paused with flushed cheeks and glowing eyes. There was silence in the hall. Friedrich looked from one to the other, but the princes avoided his glance. A little throb of disappointment ran through the buoyancy of his mood.

"My Lords," he said, and his voice wavered, "I await your answer."

Now the princes looked at one another, and Friedrich saw how a half smile dawned on the faces of some—an indulgent smile like we give to the harmless nonsense spoken by a child. The Duke of Kulmbach bent and whispered to the Elector of Brandenburg, then he turned to Friedrich.

"We knew that your Highness had listened to the rebels' talk," he said, not unkindly, "but we deemed it improbable that your advisers would permit you to harbour for an instant so mad a scheme. Believe me, Palsgrave, this is the wild dream of youth."

"The dream of youth is nobler than the faint-hearted wisdom of old age!" cried Friedrich hotly.

"Your dream of youth is treason against your over-lord, sir!" growled the Elector of Saxony.

"I have no over-lord save God and my own conscience," retorted the King Elect.

"This is rebel's talk," interposed the Duke of Wirtemberg.

"Yes, we are rebels against tyranny! Yes, we are rebels against an usurper who would take our faith from us!" cried Friedrich passionately. "My Lords, my Lords, you speak as though all this were news to you. Have you not, each and all, advised with me for the sake of our brethren in Faith? And now you speak as though this were some wild dream—some sudden scheme—I do not comprehend. My kinsman of Neuburg, what do these gentlemen mean?" he finished weakly, appealingly.

"You have gone too far, my Lord," said Neuburg coldly.

"Too far? How can a man go too far who aims at a goal and wins?" Friedrich cried, with a return of confidence. "I, the Head of this Union, have undertaken a larger task, yet I am still your acknowledged leader, and I command you to join with me in my mission against tyranny and oppression! For your honours' sake, you cannot desert the standard of Protestantism! The great ordeal has come! We have done with polemics, done with intrigue, and in the sight of all men we now raise the banner of God against the hosts of Antichrist. My Lords, there is some misunderstanding between us! You are my friends, and my father's friends; we are brethren in Faith. In the name of Christ I conjure you to give me your friendship and the assurance that, an I have need of your aid, you will not hang back."

A rough laugh greeted this passionate speech. "Our aid to keep you King," jeered the Duke of Saxony.

"By my troth, by all I love and reverence, that is a lie!" cried Friedrich wildly. "I go to Bohemia as the chosen of God to guard His Church from harm!"

"Chosen of a few rebels! Take care your Highness is not flung into a dung-heap in Bohemia," said Saxony gruffly. Many laughed.

"My Lords, you treat me mighty scurvily," Friedrich said, with dignity. "My Lords, have you at least no good words to give me?"

"Listen, your Highness," said the Duke of Kulmbach gravely. "We have one good word to give you: Go back home to Heidelberg, and live your life in peace and plenty. Your young enthusiasm is no use in statescraft. Go home, Palsgrave Friedrich, and forget this madness."

"Never!" cried Friedrich; "I am pledged to Bohemia. Would you have me play the coward—have me turn back like a white-livered dastard?"

"I would have you packed off to bed like a froward urchin, which, upon mine honour, is all you are!" roared the Duke of Saxony.

The rough jest pleased the assembly, and a storm of pent-up merriment burst forth; the princes in loud

laughter, and the clerks and notaries in that sniggering cachinnation wherewith the obsequious greet the witticisms of their superiors.

Friedrich stood for a moment with blanched lips and haggard face. It was like some sudden darkening of the world before his eyes, as if some one had struck him a blow on the temple which made his senses reel. What had happened? What had he done? The reality of life seemed gone; he was in an evil dream.

He essayed to speak; but though his lips formed words, they were drowned by the laughter. With a gesture of despair he turned away and dashed out of the council chamber.

In the ante-hall he had to shoulder his way through the crowd, which moved hastily aside, while a murmur went up: "The King." Friedrich stumbled down the winding stair like a drunken man. Outside a feeble cheer greeted him: "Hail, Palsgrave! Hail, King Friedrich!" Must all the world mock him? he thought wildly.

His horse stood at the Rathaus steps, but Duke Magnus and the other gentlemen were at the far side of the market-place laughing and talking with a group of peasant maidens.

Friedrich muttered something to the esquire who held the horse.

"Your Majesty's pardon—I did not hear!" began the youth.

The King pushed him roughly aside, flung himself upon his horse, and, without a word to the astonished esquire, galloped away as though pursued by some dread enemy. And, in truth, he was hunted by the direst foe of youth's enthusiasm: the harsh ridicule of cold experience.

CHAPTER X

KING FRIEDRICH'S RIDE

"Fellow-creature I am; fellow-servant of God:
Can man fathom God's dealings with us?
The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
Than that which parts you from some being more blest,
And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
Than ever your shallow philosophy guess'd!"

—A. Lindsay Gordon.

THE King galloped wildly onwards down the narrow street to the Röderthor. Faster—he would go faster! He spurred his horse cruelly. The gates stood wide open, and the sentries, leaning lazily against the wall, were laughing and jesting. As the King dashed past them a loud guffaw met his hearing. Probably they laughed at some witless, lewd saying, but to Friedrich it seemed that their ridicule was directed at him. They stared as he galloped by, but, although the Palsgrave was well known to them, they failed to recognise him in the rider with the wide felt-hat pulled down over the brows, and it was only after he had passed on his headlong course that they realised that the fugitive had worn the broad, blue ribbon on his breast, that ribbon of the English Garter which the Palsgrave always bore, some said because, being England's order, it seemed to him to be another love-token of Elizabeth Stuart.

The thud of the horse's hoofs sounded as the rumble of distant thunder when Friedrich galloped over the wooden boards of the outer drawbridge. Like a madman he dashed down the dusty Nürnberg road, which wound like a long, white, sinuous snake between the broad, russet fields of stubble, whence the waving yellow wheat had been reaped. On the horizon stretched the blue-black line of the distant pine-woods.

Under the desolate, slate-coloured sky the solitary rider sped onwards. On—on—bringing the agony of human thought into the deserted country scene of silent fields and dreaming marsh lands. A peewit rose out of a clump of rushes, a covey of partridges flew with a burr of wings and shrill, tweaking cries from some quiet hiding-place of deep grasses; but otherwise the stillness was only broken by the thud of the hurrying hoofs of the Flemish gelding, ridden by that despairing, black-cloaked rider.

There was madness and despair in King Friedrich's heart: it seemed to him that all the joy, all the sanity of life had been taken from him; as if some awful flood of hopeless misery had surged over him. In his ears the jeering words and laughter in the Rothenburg Rathaus rang on—he saw the hostile, mocking faces. His soul was divided by blind, impotent fury and utter bewilderment. His rage hurt him—turned him physically sick. He galloped on with bent head. Once his horse stumbled; he wrenched him up roughly, and buried his sharp spurs in the animal's trembling flanks. On—on!—he only knew that he must hurry on.

What had changed? Why had the Princes turned against him? They had known of the whole matter from the outset—and yet now they had spoken to him as to a foolish, rash boy—a trifler—an absurd meddler in grave affairs. And he? He had said nothing to them—he had answered their taunts by flight! Fool that he was! Fool! Fool!! He struck his brow with his clenched fist; the blow brought the tears to his eyes, and suddenly he sobbed aloud. Yes, fool that he was! But what would it have availed had he spoken to those cruel, unjust men? They knew already—had known all the negotiations—and they had jeered at him. Was he mad? Perhaps he had dreamed it all? Or perhaps Scultetus, Duke Christian, Maurice of Nassau, even the Duke of Bouillon, had conspired against him, had intrigued to make him the laughing-stock of Germany? It seemed to him that, like another Ishmael, his hand was against every man and

every man's hand was against him. He was baffled—spurned by those who should have been his friends.

Then, like balsam on his wounded spirit, came the thought of Elizabeth. It was as though she laid her hand on his heart, soothing the tempestuous agony. Ah! she knew—she understood—she was true to him. He knew now why he rode so wildly: he must get to her; he must hide his shame and misery, his perplexity, in the refuge of her belief in him, of her tenderness, of her brave sanity. He urged his horse onward. He would go mad if he did not get to her soon!

But, perhaps, she too would have joined the conspiracy against him? He jerked his horse back on its haunches. The cessation of movement, the stillness of the fields, the soft touch of the damp, cool air on his brow calmed his despair for an instant. He glanced back along the winding road. Far off towards Rothenburg he saw a little cloud of dust. He strained his vision. Yes, it must be a rider—some one pursuing him! Perhaps the Princes of the Union had relented—had realised how base a thing their mockery had been—and had sent a rider to call him back? But they should wait long—those cruel, sneering renegades—they should wait long before he would return to them! They should learn that he was a king, a man with a lofty, serious mission in the world; they should bitterly repent their insolence! He was no callow youth to be treated thus. His twenty-three summers had made him, he deemed, sufficiently mature to need no reproval from grave statesmen! A measure of self-confidence returned to him. He drew himself to his full height in his saddle. Taking off the heavy felt-hat he wiped the sweat from his brow, and moistened his parched lips with his tongue. His horse was breathing in sharp gasps. Would he carry him to Amberg? It was a mighty journey without a halt, but by the bridle-path through the woods it was shorter than by the main road through Nürnberg. For nothing that man could offer—not even for the Imperial crown itself—would he ride back to Rothenburg that day.

How slowly the rider came! Doubtless he was some

sluggard greybeard sent by those other greybeards, the Princes of the Union, Friedrich told himself scornfully.

At length the rider drew near. Friedrich saw that he wore the Palatine livery. So they had sent one of his own men to call him back? The man galloped up. For an instant the King Elect looked at him in silence.

"What is your message? What do the Princes send to me?" he asked haughtily.

"I have no message, your Majesty," replied the man breathlessly; "I saw you ride away, and as my horse was the only one ready saddled I rode after you. Your pardon, your Majesty, but you cannot ride thus alone."

"You—have—no—message? No one sent you?" said Friedrich slowly.

"None, sire. Duke Magnus and the other gentlemen went to the Rathaus after you rode away. But I have ridden often with your honoured father and with you: I could not let you ride through the country alone," the man said humbly.

So the only one to follow him, the only faithful one among them all, was this old retainer, a man to whom in happy days he had half-unconsciously thrown a careless word of courteous greeting!

"I thank you, friend," he said quietly. "Will you follow me to Amberg? I ride on very urgent business." Without another word he spurred his horse forward. Once more the wheel of distraught, agonised thought whirled in his brain; through it all there was but one clear idea—this, that he must reach Amberg—Amberg and Elizabeth Stuart. Once or twice his follower called to him:

"Stay, your Highness, or your horse will fail you!" For a few moments Friedrich halted; but then, though the poor beast strove for breath, he galloped on again. On, over field and marshland, thundering through the peaceful hamlets, deserted for the most part by the villagers at work ploughing the fields; though sometimes groups of children stared, or peasant women, framed in the darkness of narrow doorways, stood and watched the riders pass; or

perhaps a tottering gaffer in a village street would shout hoarsely at them, or mutter through toothless gums, something that may have been a blessing or the peevish malediction of the senile. But hurrying riders were no uncommon disturbers of the hamlets' peace: "Princes and their messengers ride the devil's nags," the saying went among the peasants.

On through pine woods and beech groves, where the fallen leaves lay deep deadening the sound of the horses' hoofs. Once the horses stopped before a little rill of pure water which trickled across the bridle-path.

"Let him drink a mouthful, your Highness; for God's sake, breathe him a moment or he will fail you!" the henchman urged. "Alas! the King is mad!" the man muttered to himself, for Friedrich stared at him with wild, unseeing eyes; yet for a little space he let his horse stand still. Then again he struck his spurs into the poor animal's heaving sides, and the wild race began once more. On—on———

They were past Nürnberg now. The bridle track lay across the stubble fields beyond the town walls. As they sped through a village again the henchman called to Friedrich—

"Stay, your Highness, and rest an hour at this wayside inn! Only an hour, your Highness, I can no more!" But the King Elect paid no heed; he galloped on savagely. How could he wait for food and drink? Wait! who had said wait? That was King James's word! Perhaps if he had waited for the English King's advice the Princes of the Union would not have dared to fail him—to insult him thus? But they had known! The rhythmic thud of the horses' hoofs wove itself into a refrain in his distraught mind: "They have known—they have known—" and then again: "My hand against them—always now—for they have known—" Laughter! who had laughed at him?—who jeered at him? The illusion was so complete that he checked his horse to listen—it was only the henchman calling to him again:—

"I can no more—my horse is spent! Wait, your Highness!" The King waved his arm in a gesture of angry dismissal, and urged his failing steed on—on———

He was alone now; the henchman had fallen behind. Alone! of course he was alone—he, Ishmael, the outcast, whose hand was against every man!

The light of the autumn day grew dim, but he was not far from Amberg now; only a few more leagues to ride and he would kneel before Elizabeth Stuart and rest his head upon her breast. He knew each yard of the road now—each tiny grassy valley with the brown rocks standing out so quaintly; each clump of fir-trees was familiar. On, poor horse—on—only a few more leagues—on—on——

The mist was sweeping up in long, low, white clouds from the valleys, and the trees were indistinct in the half light. The horse galloped feebly, the thud-thud of his hoofs was irregular, faltering, but the chill of the damp mist against his breast and in his straining, foam-flecked nostrils refreshed him, and he responded gallantly to the cruel urging of his rider's spur, and to the jerks of the bridle against the bit. Then, of a sudden, he stumbled and fell, flinging Friedrich violently forward. The King extricated himself from the stirrups and stood beside the quivering, panting animal.

"A few more leagues! Up, you brute, up!" he called wildly, and wrenched at the bridle. Poor Hurry lay still for a moment, with straining, bloodshot eyes which implored dumbly for mercy; then slowly, weakly, he struggled up and stood trembling. The King flung himself into the saddle, and once more the jaded, broken steed galloped on.

The night fell and a little moaning breeze sprang up. Twice—thrice—poor Hurry staggered, and the King was forced to let him stand, for his breath came in whistling, laboured gasps, and it seemed as though he must fall; but Friedrich urged him on and the ruthless spurs tore his sides. Bravely, magnificently, fighting the death in his failing limbs, the cracking agony in his heart, the horse sped on, hour after hour; each mile he went slower, more weakly, but still on—on—on beneath that urging hand—beneath those cruel spurs. Mile after mile they traversed. How long the well-known road seemed in the darkness!

They passed through a village ; all was quiet, all slept—the curfew had tolled hours since. It was night. At last, below in the valley there shone a few twinkling lights from the Amberg watch-towers. The rider saw them, and a cry of joy burst from his lips With a brave effort the heroic horse galloped onward down the slope and over the plain.

The Vilsthor was shut, but King Friedrich's cry brought a sleepy gatekeeper to peer through the slit-window in the heavy gate. Slowly the great bolts and ponderous bars were withdrawn and the door creakingly swung open. Again the spurs rent the horse's flanks, and he struggled forward through the cobble-stoned street to the Castle moat; but here on the bridge he failed, staggered, stumbled, plunged forward, stumbled again and fell prone. That last gallop had rent his heart in twain—so near the haven of rest. Alas! that gallop had killed him. Feebly the slim, graceful limbs twitched; for the last time those brave, faithful eyes, fast glazing now, yearned up in an agony of supplication, praying for forgiveness to the rider who had ridden him to death. The King stood gazing on the one friend who, on a day of failure, had not failed him; on a day of lonely pain, had not deserted him; the one friend who had given his life to serve him.

The castle lay shrouded in darkness and silence. Twice a sentry challenged the King as he strode up.

"Halt, or I fire!" the man-at-arms shouted as Friedrich gave no answer.

"Fool! I am the Palsgrave!" Friedrich cried angrily. The man fell back. "Open! Open! God's life! am I to be shut out of mine own castle?" the King cried, and beat against the door furiously. From the river a white mist had risen, and wrapped the world in a chill embrace. The King listened. There was silence over city and castle.

"Is it so late?" he called to the sentry.

"Nigh upon midnight, your Highness," the man answered. Ah, yes! he had travelled slowly since nightfall—the horse, poor brute, had been so slow—so slow. Poor Hurry—what a hideous dream it was——

"Open! open! It is I, the Palsgrave!" he called again, and smote the panels with his clenched fists. Somewhere in the castle a door banged, and a footfall echoed through the quiet house. At last the heavy door was opened narrowly, and a serving-man's face peered through the crack.

"Open! It is I, the Palsgrave!" Friedrich cried again. The flickering light from a lantern fell on the King's face, then an exclamation of surprise came from the serving-man, and the door was flung wide.

"Your Highness! Where is your Highness's horse? Shall I lead him to the stable?" the astonished man stammered.

"On the bridge—dead! Oh God!" the King answered, and a sob burst from his lips.

"Friedrich! what has happened?" Elizabeth Stuart stood on the stairs. She stood there in her trailing bed-gown, her luxuriant, brown hair spread like a cloak over her shoulders. Her eyes were brilliant with sleep, and a rosy flush was on her cheek, like the glow on the face of an awakened child.

"Friedrich, my Lord! what have they done to thee?" she said wonderingly. He pushed past her almost roughly.

"Come! not here! I cannot tell you here! All the world listens, all the world mocks me!" he half sobbed. She followed him into her sleeping-room. Here a single taper burned, and through the uncurtained casement the murky night seemed like a sombre, inexorable eye gazing into the room. Elizabeth had thrown back the curtain when, startled from sleep, she had endeavoured to see what brought that clamour beneath her windows.

Friedrich fell on his knees beside her chair, and hoarse sobs shook him as an ague fit.

"Who has dared to do this to thee?" she cried. "Friedrich, my poor, tired love! I will fetch wine!" She passed into the supper-parlour. In a small wall-press she found a flask of sack. With trembling hands she poured a deep draught into a silver goblet, and brought it to the King. Very tenderly she lifted his head, and soothingly, as we

speak to a tired child, she bade him drink and rest. At first he could not swallow the wine, for his sobs rent him, and his throat seemed closed by some cruel, strangling hand. She held the goblet to his lips.

"Drink, my dear one; you see you are safe with me. Friedrich, my love! Poor wounded heart of mine!" she said again and again. At length he grew calmer, and slowly, like a sick man, he drank. Then she sat down and drew him to her. For a while he lay there as one stunned; and then, in halting broken words, he told her the piteous story of his humiliation, of his defeat, of his furious ride, and of how poor Hurry had fallen dead on the castle bridge.

She held him quietly in her strong arms, and gradually, like the calming of a tempestuous sea, the waves of madness and despair in his soul sank to stillness. The hammering questions in his brain ceased, and he rested —almost slept. But Elizabeth, wide-eyed and tortured, gazed out into the darkness through the uncurtained casement. She marvelled dumbly that such weakness could be, and yet she was too strong, too unself-conscious, to despise Friedrich. She only yearned to help and comfort him, to hide his weakness in her strength. Courage! courage! what was the use of despair? she asked herself silently.

Yet she could not forgive him for having ridden his horse to death. Through her pity for Friedrich there pulsed now a little throb of scorn which his weakness had not called forth; but this was a meanness, a crime against a faithful, willing friend. She pictured poor Hurry striving to content his rider, on—on, over those long, weary miles; she saw the poor beast's patient, straining eyes, clouded with death now: death in the service of a careless, thoughtless rider! A hot flush of anger rose to her cheek; her brother could not, no Englishman could, have done such a thing, she thought. She realised the eternal barrier of nationality between her and Friedrich. Resolutely she turned her thoughts away—that was a subject it was disloyal to consider; this man was

her man—weak perchance, faulty—but her man for all that. Over the bowed brown head which leaned on her breast she smiled, ruefully a trifle, but bravely, humorously remembering her brother's saying of her that: "The mare was the better horse of the Palatine pair."

Complete stillness reigned in the castle of Amberg. Elizabeth moved her arm from beneath Friedrich's shoulder.

"Oh! ma mie, let me rest another moment," he murmured plaintively, and then once more he recounted of his failure, of the cruel insult he had suffered; called himself a fool, bitterly reproached himself. And Elizabeth, with all the generous inconsistency of a loyal woman, spoke to him of how brave he was. She praised him, laughed gently at his doubts and fears, assured him of her trust in him and of her belief in his future, because she felt that in her confidence in him lay his only chance of courage; because, too, confidence was the expression of her loyalty.

The grey dawn saw Friedrich sleeping peacefully, saw too, how Elizabeth Stuart's eyes were wide with sleepless sadness, for this was the first time she had realised to the full how weak a thing was Friedrich, King of Bohemia.

CHAPTER XI

PRAGUE

"Quem Deus perdere vult dementat prius."

AN autumn haze lay over the White Mountain, and a heavy dew sparkled on the scant grass which clothed the long, bare slope. A train of splendid travellers wound its slow way along the road which leads out of far-off Germany to Prague. First clattered a regiment of mounted arquebusiers, whose accoutrements glittered bravely in the morning sun. Behind them came a gallant cortège of nobles, and following these were five gilded coaches. Then came a detachment of men-at-arms and a long file of baggage waggons and sumptermen with laden horses. This day Friedrich, King of Bohemia, and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, with their suite, journeyed from the Castle of Bustehrad, where they had spent the preceding night, to their town of Prague.

Autumn had decked Bohemia to greet her new sovereign: the bare hills, so unutterably dreary under a leaden sky, smiled to-day beneath the haze—smiled and glistened in the morning dew.

Beside her Majesty's coach rode my young Lord Bernard of Thurn, son of the statesman. The elder Thurn was a polished courtier, a man who knew both Court and camp; but, though he played the patriot, he was, in truth, more Austrian than Bohemian; whereas his son, brought up at Prague, was a true Czech, with all the Czech's fiery love of his country.

Bernard Thurn rode beside Elizabeth Stuart's carosse and told her, in glowing words, a dozen histories of old Bohemian days.

"See, madame!" he cried, "by this road, here to the right, we should reach Karlstein. Ah! how noble a

fortress! Never in all history has an enemy captured this stronghold. I would I could hide you there, madame, if ever the enemy threatened. For a year and a day I would hold it for you! For a year? Nay!—for ever, if need be!" The Queen laughed.

"For a year and a day, as in some fairy story," she said.

"Madame, Karlstein is like some fabled castle of old!" he cried enthusiastically. He told her how the Emperor Charles IV. had built it deep in the hill-land, so hidden away that no invading army could ever find it; how the magnificent stronghold was guarded by difficult passes; how it stood high on a crag and was built up around the soaring rock peak, which was thrust forth grimly in the masonry even at the level of the highest windows; and that, above all, over the gigantic rock, high in the clouds, secluded even above the abode of kings, grandly isolated from all, was the sacred chapel where the Bohemian crown was kept. He told her how the Emperor Sigismund, the accursed one, who had doomed Master John Hus to a fiery death, had stolen many of the precious stones, had torn away whole sheets of silver and gold, and caused them to be melted down to make coin to pay for his shameful splendour. Bernard Thurn spoke with poetic fervour, and Elizabeth Stuart sat in her gilded carosse and listened with shining eyes and parted lips, as a child listens to a fairy tale. He told her how no man might enter the sanctuary of the Kreuz Kapelle, no man save God's high priests and the Bohemian King; but yet how sometimes his father, Burggrave of Karlstein, had let him peep into the outer chapel, a wondrous place, like unto a chapter of the Revelation of St. John. For the walls were encrusted with precious stones, the roof was wrought in pure gold, and the windows were made of strange glittering crystals, through which the dim light fell in a thousand prismatic hues athwart the floor of jasper, jade, and porphyry. On the walls between the flashing setting of topaz, of amethyst, and of pale iridescent opals, chrysolites, and blood-red garnets, there were set mosaics representing Bohemia's saints,

whose halos, and the jewels of whose vestments, were of gold and priceless gems.

"Does all this marvel still remain?" Elizabeth asked wonderingly.

"Aye, sweet madame, and, as long as Karlstein stands, the Bohemian race will not forget their ancient glory and their bitter wrongs," said young Thurn.

The sun was high in the heavens when the King's cortège drew near to the Star Palace on the White Mountain, that quaint Renaissance pavilion which the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria had caused to be built for the Lady Philippine Welser, the patrician maiden of Augsburg, whom he had raised to royal rank by wedding her in the face of the Emperor's bitter hostility. A strange pavilion, this Star Palace, for even a hunting-lodge in those days was perforce fortified, and the Palace, built in six massive-pointed sections to portray a star in stone, was surrounded by a ponderous loopholed wall; and it was believed that the Star Palace was an impregnable, if miniature, fortress.

That day the heavy gates stood wide open; Bohemia's flag flew bravely above the Palace; rich tapestries were hung from out the windows, and a crowd of gorgeously clad nobles stood before the door eager to greet their Sovereign Lord and his gracious Lady.

All the actors in the Bohemian drama were there: my Lords of Thurn, of Hohenlohe, of Michaelowitz, Count Ernest Mansfeld, Duke Christian of Anhalt and his son Prince Christel, Duke Magnus of Wirtemberg, Duke William of Weimar; the Bohemian Lords William of Lobkowitz, Ruppa, Czernin, Kinsky; the aged Schlick, and many other Czechish gentlemen. Right glad was this meeting between Friedrich of the Palatinate and the men who had made him King. The autumn sun shone on a gay scene enough, and surely it was of happy augury that the new King and Queen should make their entry into Prague on this smiling autumn day?

In the Star Palace a banquet had been spread, and soon the pavilion rang with laughter and young voices.

After the banquet the English ladies wandered with the Bohemian gallants through the quaint chambers formed by the six points of the star. Tapestries were hung on the walls beneath those delicate Renaissance mouldings of the frieze, which have made the Star Palace famous as a very treasury of perfect design. In each room logs flamed in the wide, open fireplaces; and the ladies vowed that Bohemia was a friendly land.

"We have only seen sunshine and kindly looks since we came to your country, my lords," said Elizabeth Stuart to the nobles who stood around her. "And this is the goodliest hunting-lodge I have ever seen! I shall often journey hither, and I pray you all to grace my first feast in the Star!"

"A Star Palace is a fitting resting-place for the fairest star of womanhood!" murmured young Bernard Thurn; and Ritter Christel cast him a half-melancholy, half-humorous look, for he saw that the youth had already learned to worship at that shrine where so many worshipped, and were rewarded—by a smile.

The Bohemians were hugely diverted by her Majesty's monkey, and when she told them, in her light way, that he was her eldest son, they laughed long. Little Prince Hal, leaning against his mother's knee, cried out that he was her eldest son.

"Mother, I am Prince of Bohemia!" he whimpered angrily.

"Nay, sweeting, Jacky is my heir!" returned Elizabeth, laughing. A chill fell on the laughing group. The Bohemians found this a sorry jest. Did their new Queen mock them? Did she mean that a monkey was good enough to be Bohemia's King? The unfortunate are easily wounded by a light word, and the Bohemians, ever an unlucky race, are morbidly sensitive and quickly suspicious.

Elizabeth Stuart saw the changed look on the courtiers' faces. With a sudden sense of helplessness she realised that a foreign language is a dangerous vehicle for jest. She had spoken in French, and the Bohemians for the most part knew the language but indifferently. She

glanced at the King. He was standing in the embrasure of one of the windows with Hohenlohe, old Thurn, and Master Scultetus. Affairs of State at the wrong moment, of course, she thought impatiently! She rose.

"We must hurry onwards now," she cried. "I would fain tarry at this happy place, but I am all impatient to behold my new abode in Prague."

The bevy of English damsels gathered round her, the coaches were summoned, and amid laughter and gaiety the cortège resumed its way over the White Mountain.

When the travellers came to the brow of the hill, Prague lay like a dream-city in the haze of the autumn midday. The sun touched to splendour the myriad turrets, towers, cupolas, and spires of the Hradcány Palace, and the broad majestic Moldau, sweeping grandly onwards between the "Old City" and the "Small Town," seemed to be an inlet from the blue sky. Along the road beyond the city walls a dense crowd of peasants stood and welcomed the splendid cavalcade with outbursts of passionate joy. King Friedrich on a sorel charger rode alone, isolated from the other riders so that all should see him. He wore a sumptuous tunic of "viol-brown" velvet embroidered with silver, his slashed hose were of brown, his hat and feather were brown, his ruff was of fair white linen, and on his breast there flashed the jewelled collar of St. George of England; a right kingly figure, this debonnair prince, this brave young champion of an oppressed people; and the dark-browed Czechs, with the short dog-like faces and pathetic dog-like yearning eyes, gave him rapturous greeting as he rode to their well-beloved Prague.

With a clang, as though the whole world had been set ringing, the bells of the city chimed out from every church and chapel. At the Strahow Gate the royal cortège halted, King Friedrich dismounted, and her Majesty, too, descended from her coach. The whole Court formed a circle behind the King and Queen, while the burgomaster and the chief city authorities did homage to their new ruler.

Now through the gates there appeared a curious com-

pany of riders: men in ancient breastpieces and battered helmets, with targets, scythes and sickles, hayforks and ploughshares, and rude two-handed swords, notched, broken, and rusty with age. These grotesque riders halted before the King and struck their weapons against their targets. For a moment Elizabeth Stuart remained grave and dignified, then her lips trembled and she turned her head away to hide her amusement at these uncouth welcomers. Unfortunately her eyes met the laughing gaze of Duke Magnus.

At this moment the riders burst forth in a hoarse cry: "Vivat Rex Ferdinandus!"

Friedrich's face grew dark. What meant the loons? Was it in mockery that they greeted him by the name of his enemy? Schlick spoke to Thurn, who in a hurried whisper, explained that this was a mistake, and that in their excitement the peasant band had shouted the wrong name. A Bohemian gentleman went forward and spoke with the leader of the troop, and now they thundered: "Vivat! Vivat Fredericus Rex!"

But this had been too much for the Queen's composure, and she and her whole Court laughed in a tempest of hilarity. Even Friedrich was infected by the merriment, and, though he strove to hide his amusement, after an instant he too gave in and joined in the untimely mirth.

For a space the peasant warriors waited. They were the descendants of those who had fought under Ziska in the Hussite wars, and their curious accoutrements were the weapons which their forbears had wielded to revenge Bohemia's patriot, Master John Hus. These strange, battered weapons were their most cherished possessions, sacred emblems to them of Bohemia's freedom, beautiful in their eyes because they had been beautiful to the reverent gaze of many generations. And on this day they had come forth bearing these sacred relics of their country's history as symbols of their ardour in their new King's service. They did not know that they appeared queer and ridiculous,—alas! when do we ever know how absurd the expression of our feelings seems to the cold scrutiny of the world?

They stood dumbfounded before the laughing Court, these Czech peasants in their ludicrous armour. Not they alone were wounded by the thoughtless mirth, the Bohemian nobles also were aghast at such ill-mannered levity. Young Thurn came to the King.

"Sire," he said bitterly, "perchance you do not know the meaning of those weapons, broken in Bohemia's service, but I pray you speak with these men. They wish you well, and would die for you." The King measured him with a haughty look. Like most Germans, Friedrich was very jealous of his dignity.

"I am not accustomed to receive commands, sir," he said stiffly; yet he stepped forward and would have given greeting to the peasant troop, but with dark looks the men turned away, and with a jangle of steel and iron they galloped through the Strahow gate.

"Unmannerly clowns!" cried the King angrily. "I have to thank you, my young Count Thurn, for this affront," he added.

Once more the cortège moved on. In the broad street which led from the Strahow gate to the palace, the populace stood so densely packed that the King's progress was of necessity slow; but his Majesty appeared to have forgotten his displeasure, and it was a very smiling, gracious youth whom the people of Prague greeted as their King on that bright autumn morning of 1619.

. . . . . .

A courtly company wandered through the suite of rooms which the Emperor Rudolf had built above the state chambers of the Hradcány, to store his collection of pictures, statues, and carven ivories. Her new Majesty of Bohemia, with a true Stuart's love of art, rejoiced in finding such masterpieces in her new abode, and she vowed they consoled her for a multitude of small discomforts.

"Ah!" she cried, "see this carven ivory, and this fair woman's face of far-off times! A Greek idolatrous image you say, Master Scultetus? Alack! but beauty may be an earthly and vain thing and a snare for the soul, as

you tell me, Hochwürden, but I am consoled thereby for the ugliness of the brown Moldau water wherein I laved my hands this day!" She laughed and passed on with her ladies. Scultetus shook his head; her Majesty was too full of laughter, too light of word. The worthy preacher gave the Queen no credit for her undaunted cheerfulness through many a weary day. He loved the sour faces and the whining tones of narrow piety.

Merrily Elizabeth Stuart and her Court paced through the rooms. It was the day after their Majesties' entrance into Prague, and the Queen was like some happy child exploring the rambling precincts of the Hradcány Palace; yet she shuddered when she was shown the council chamber window wherefrom the Imperial Councillors had been flung.

In the midst of her wanderings, a lackey came and announced that a deputation of burghers' ladies craved audience, and her Majesty immediately hurried to receive them. Count Schomberg, following in the Queen's wake, sighed at the lack of etiquette in Bohemia. There seemed to be no thought of careful, programmatic arrangement; and he sighed again when he remembered the absurd occurrences of the preceding day. A Court uncontrolled by a definite programme is like a troop of comedians without a scene-master; the clown and the harlequin play the first rôles, and no one knows if the stage king may not suddenly don the clown's cap, he thought angrily.

Elizabeth Stuart stood waiting to receive the Bohemian matrons. Amalia Solms and the English ladies-in-waiting were grouped behind her. Master Scultetus and Schomberg stood together, nervously awaiting the appearance of the deputation, and Schomberg cursed the lack of foresight which had caused the Queen of a foreign-speaking race to be thus unprepared for the reception of her new subjects. He prayed that some of the Bohemian matrons would know a few words of French or German. Ah! why had he not insisted on some one who was master or mistress of the Czech tongue being in per-

manent attendance on the Queen? It was a ridiculous and awkward predicament—a fit subject for a comedy; ruefully he considered that comedies may be diverting to the audience, but that to the players themselves they are often unpleasant.

The doors of the Queen's audience chamber were thrown open, and there entered some dozen portly matrons, dark-browed and sallow, with short, broad faces and melancholy eyes. They were clad in very full cloth skirts and stiff, pointed bodices adorned with numerous gold and silver chains; their head-dresses were towering edifices of plaited ribbon held down to the oiled, dark hair by heavy round metal ornaments of barbaric design. These matrons, looking portentously solemn, each bore a loaf of bread so vast that they were forced to encircle it with both arms; at their girdles were hung large salt-bags. They stood in silence before the Queen. Elizabeth stepped forward.

"I give you good greeting, mesdames," she said; "if it is your kind wish to bring me the delicious bakery of your ovens, I thank you." She looked round helplessly. Schomberg's face was blank with astonishment, and even Master Scultetus's gaunt cheeks were brick coloured, and his lips twitched with laughter. Her Majesty's eyes met the derisive glance of my Lady Phyllis Devereux.

"For the dear Lord's sake, sweet friend, do not laugh," whispered her Majesty. "Schomberg, what am I to say to these strange visitors?" A ripple of merriment broke the silence.

"Mesdames, I thank you," began Elizabeth once more; and then, alas! her gravity departed, and she laughed aloud.

One of the Bohemian matrons came forward and spoke some swift, indistinct Czechish words; but laughter had usurped the place of prudence, of dignity, and of kindliness, and would not be stilled.

The ladies of Prague turned away, and, with bowed heads, filed out of the audience chamber. The offering of loaves and salt was an ancient Bohemian custom. It

was symbolic not only of their homage, but of their goodwill, of their ardour to serve and to give of their wealth to their liege lords. This usage was so universal among Slav races that the Prague matrons could not believe that any one could misunderstand the significance of the homely ceremony.

. . . . . .

The four days between King Friedrich's arrival in Prague and his coronation were taken up by long and anxious consultations between the King, Scultetus, Camerarius, the chief Bohemian nobles, and the Administrator or Lutheran Archbishop, as to the rites to be used for crowning this Calvinistic King. It was unanimously agreed that no ritual of the Roman Church could find a place in this ceremony; but it was distinctly difficult to anoint a king, to present him with the sacred symbols of his office, to go through a grand religious ceremonial, if all the ancient customs were to be condemned as idolatrous. Like so much in the history of King Friedrich, it was not only an awkward dilemma, but there was a ridiculous vein, an inconsistency in the whole matter. He must be crowned for reasons of State and public sentiment; his coronation must be a grand and impressive rite, symbolic of the majesty, of the power, and of the holy office of kings—and his Calvinistic creed forbade ritual and condemned symbols! If nothing was to be taken from the ordained Romish coronation form, what could they devise to fill the place thus vacant?

Then Scultetus and the Lutheran Administrator embarked on a flood of polemic, and disagreeing, of course, they returned from their theological voyage, bringing personal animosity to add to the tangle. It was most unpleasant, a little absurd, and time pressed, for the coronation was fixed for November 4th, and take place it must, in one form or another. They asked anxiously what form had been used in the crowning of other Protestant kings? Queen Elizabeth of England had been crowned and anointed according to the ancient ritual, though she had caused gospel and epistle to be read in English.

James I. and Queen Anne had been crowned together, but there was no time for the Bohemian Council to ascertain the exact form used. Also Scultetus claimed that the tenets of the English Church were a mixture of Lutheran and Popish doctrine; King Friedrich was Calvinistic and should be crowned according to his cult. At length the disputants were silenced by Time, who pressed, and by the decision of the Bohemian nobles, who averred that as the coronation was that of a Bohemian king, it should be done according to the will of the Bohemian Lutheran Administrator.

So on the 4th day of November 1619, in the ancient Church of St. Vitus, Friedrich, Prince Palatine, was anointed and crowned King, with a Lutheran ritual. The Czechish language was used instead of Latin; the monarch himself understanding no word thereof, recited the responses in the national tongue, having learned to gabble them by heart. Scultetus, allowed no part in the proceedings, stood dark-browed and sombre, watching his pupil receive crown, orb and sceptre, ring and sword. And Scultetus vowed in his heart that the pure Faith of Calvin should be avenged for this outrage.

It was a time of banqueting and much splendour in Prague. The cannon thundered royal salutes; gold and silver were scattered, by the King's command, among the populace; the fountains ran with good red wine; the citizens feasted and rejoiced; the councillors voted large sums for the royal maintenance; and medals were struck to commemorate the coronation.

Meanwhile, on the southern Bohemian frontier, guarding the passes from Lower Austria, there was encamped a horde of starving, unpaid men, who often stole away to the villages to sell their weapons, generally for mean prices, yet sufficient to buy a little food. This was the army of Friedrich, King of Bohemia, just now so grandly crowned; of Friedrich, who scattered gold and silver among the populace of Prague!

Her Majesty Elizabeth, too, a few days later, was crowned with much pomp, and again there was universal

rejoicing, more banqueting, more feasting for the citizens, more wine flowing from the fountains, and enormous quantities of bread and meat distributed among the poor.

There came no thought of disaster to the new Court; all was splendour and rejoicing. What mattered it that King James of England wrote angry censure of the crown's acceptance? That from Vienna came the menace of the Empire's ban being laid upon Friedrich? That Maximilian of Bavaria wrote solemn warning? That the Elector of Saxony openly threw in his lot with the Imperial party? Friedrich was an anointed King and Elizabeth Stuart a crowned Queen: the dream of years had become a reality. Friedrich was but three-and-twenty, and success is an intoxicating draught to the young.

Towards the end of November her Majesty gave birth to a son, and again Prague rejoiced; and the kindly Bohemian matrons appeared once more, and this time they brought a far different gift instead of those misunderstood loaves! They offered Elizabeth Stuart an ebony cradle inlaid with ivory, and a kist filled with fine linen for the baby prince.

Prosperity, peace, and content reigned over Bohemia, but there was a sombre figure moving through the groups of gay courtiers at the Hradcány palace, a man full of hatred, discontent, and anger; this was Master Scultetus the Calvinist. Elizabeth Stuart noted a cloud on the King's brow. She questioned him, but he gave evasive answers, and, in her happiness, she paid scant heed to his troubled look. Friedrich was a man of moods, and she was well used to his changes of mien.

. . . . . .

One chill December morning Master Scultetus and a crowd of black-cloaked men, followed by a gang of workmen, entered the ancient Church of St. Vitus, which adjoins the Hradcány Palace. The church lay in gloom, no light glimmered before the high altar, no lamps shed their radiance before the shrines of St. Vitus and of St.

John Nepomuk. For three hundred years these lights had burned before the relics of those holy martyrs; for three hundred years the Czechish people had prayed God to hear their petitions through the intercession of these His chosen ones. Even when the Bohemians had broken away from their ancient cult, in pious memory they had still venerated these shrines, and Lutheran and Papist alike had seen in the honouring of Bohemia's great dead a sacred national custom. A few days before the new King, the hero who was to deliver Bohemia, came to Prague, the Cathedral of St. Vitus had been taken from the priests, and since then the church had been deserted; the flowers had withered upon the altars, and in the untended lamps the little flames had flickered and sunk to death. There were many among the populace who had bitterly resented this harsh dealing. Had not Friedrich promised religious freedom to Bohemia? Not alone the Papists were moved to anger; the Lutherans, too, resented this act of Calvinistic tyranny. It was a dangerous thing to affront the revered "Domherren," the priests of the Church of St. Vitus; and though each priest was paid a few thalers a week, this scanty pension could not appease their anger nor assuage their horror at the injustice of Freedom's champion dispossessing them of their church. Quietly the well-known "Domherren" glided through the streets of Prague, whispering their bitterness into the ears of Lutheran and Catholic alike. These priests had been in the crowd which had stood round the doors of the Vitus Church during the coronation; and though the feasting populace, in the excitement of the rejoicings, had scarce noticed the whispers, some of the poison had slipped into their thoughts, and afterwards, when the merrymaking was past, they had remembered the priests' words, and a pulse of sullen resentment, a quaver of suspicion, had lived in the people's hearts against their Calvinistic ruler.

Master Scultetus and his followers stood gazing into the dark church. High over the rood-screen the stone crucifix seemed an appeal so potent that it was almost a

menace, and on the many altars in the aisles the carven figures of the saints loomed like quiet watchers. All around, a majestic company of silent witnesses to their country's vanished greatness, lay Bohemia's mighty dead—keeping watch they, too, in the desolate church: Emperors and Kings and Dukes of Bohemia, their names recording dynasties long dead; and beside them lay the proud nobles of the land: Lobkowitz and Duba, Wlaschin and Rozmital, Pardubitz and Wratislaw von Pernstein, knights and princes of the church. Verily, it was a sumptuous court gathered round the King of Pain and Humility upon the cross.

The deserted church was a sanctuary of stillness and of memory, and even Scultetus paused on the threshold. Then, with a fierce gesture, like a cruel hunter setting his hounds at a fallen prey, he flung out his arm.

"See! The accursed dolls, the hideous idols!" he cried. "See the graven images before which the people are wont to offer sacrilegious prayer! Away with these sham gods! We are come to cleanse God's church! Down with these wanton effigies!"

The black-cloaked company rushed into the church. Like madmen they broke open the wrought-iron railings before the tombs of Bohemia's nobles, and with fury they attacked the altars, trampling under foot the silken hangings, strewing the withered flowers upon the ground, and hurling down the golden altar vases. Half a hundred German masons and artisans, and a band of mercenary soldiers whom Scultetus had summoned to perform this foul task, set to work upon the stone figures of the saints, dealing blow after blow with their hammers upon the serene faces of the sacred statues. A flood of ribaldry broke loose as the madness of destruction rose in the hearts of these rough men, half-drunken already from the raw spirits which the Calvinist had caused to be served to them ere they followed him to the church.

"Ha! you meek-faced wench, you'd have made a pretty bedfellow had you tried that game instead of piping prayers!" yelled one man as he shattered the

mild brow of St. Agnes. A roar of coarse laughter greeted this.

"Come, here's Peter with his keybunch! I would it could open the priests' cellar," shouted another, while he hacked with his heavy axe into the gilded statue of St. Peter.

"See, comrades! I've found a blessed saint's pate," roared a drunken Saxon lurching from a side-chapel. "Here! catch it then! I'll warrant 'twill make a good ball!" He flung the skull into a group of workers who toiled to shatter the delicate stone tracery of the chancel gate.

The ravagers warmed to their work. Scultetus stood with folded arms gazing on the ghastly sight with a smile of exultation. He laid no touch upon the wrecked church, but he gloated over each blow dealt to those accursed Popish images. The church was like some mad dream of a devastated feasting-hall; the ground was strewn with silken hangings, with velvets, with embroideries of gold and silver thread; golden vases rolled on the stone floor; waxen limbs from the lesser shrines lay, grotesque and horrible, in the folds of the altar-cloths; gilt and silver candlesticks, bent and twisted, lay about; and jewelled reliquaries, despoiled of their precious stones, were mixed into the gorgeous refuse of spoiled beauty; and everywhere, like symbols of death, lay the withered flowers from the altars. The thunderous noise of hammers upon the stone rang out unceasingly, while ever and anon a deafening crash told that another statue had been felled. A knot of men made it their especial task to empty the reliquaries, and with obscene jests the sacred dust was flung about, and the brittle bones of the long dead were broken and thrown into the air with lewd shouts for their last requiem mass.

Still, over all, the crucified King remained inviolate, high above the wrecked rood-screen. Only two things had been spared by the destroyers—the crucifix and the royal oratory, that quaint fifteenth-century gallery which clung to the church wall like a swallow's nest, high above

the ravagers' reach. But it was not for this reason that the oratory had been spared; Scultetus, the low-born preacher, had commanded his men to lay no touch upon this sacred place of royal prayer; and thus, although the aureoled figures of saints were mingled with the emblems of monarchy in the ornaments of the oratory, they had remained scatheless.

The crimson curtain in the royal gallery was thrust aside, and Friedrich, King of Bohemia, looked down and saw how his new country's beloved cathedral was turned into the shambles of beauty and a fearful picture of outraged reverence. Scultetus saw him and pointed at the destruction.

"As the Lord purged the Temple, so have I cleansed this church of the dross of idolatry," he said sternly. The wreckers, seeing King Friedrich, paused in their abominable work.

"On, my friends!" cried Scultetus. "Pull down the last vestige of the heathen's worship!" His glance rested on the crucifix. "Ah! here is work for you!" he cried. "Break me that profane thing of the image-worshippers! Down! Down!"

Among the gentry who had accompanied Scultetus, indeed those who had led the work of destruction, were six Bohemians of the lesser nobility; these were Bushuslav, Berkha, Budowitz, young Michaelowitz, Berbistorf, and Daniel Secreta. Calvinists and sworn enemies of the priests, they had joyed in the havoc, but even they hung back before the wrecking of the crucifix. It was Bohemia's most venerated shrine this great crucifix of St. Vitus, and a most beauteous work of the twelfth century.

"It is pity to break that, master," muttered Berkha hesitatingly. "It cannot harm to leave that."

"You are not earnest for the Faith, sir! Root and branch shall this church be cleansed of the defilement of filthy idols," cried Scultetus, and to the masons he shouted: "On to your task! I will pay a double wage to those who break down yonder heathen image." His words renewed the workmen's ardour, and in an instant

they had roped the head of Christ, and sixteen men dragged at the cords, while a score hewed and hammered at the base of the cross.

With a thunderous crash the mass of stone fell to the ground, and for a moment the wreckers drew back in superstitious awe, for the whole church rocked, as if the mighty edifice shuddered at the sacrilege. The fall had broken the stone cross, and, among the crimson velvets of a heap of altar-cloths, the Figure of the Crucified lay prone, strangely real and piteous like a newly-slain victim. The awestruck workmen stood huddled together, but Berbistorf, recovering from his momentary fear, sprang forward and touched the prone Figure with his foot.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, laughing gruffly. "Ha! Thou who hast claimed to save sinners, prove now Thy power, save Thyself! Ho, ho! He cannot! See, comrades, the idol is broken down!" Scornfully the blasphemer spurned the fallen Christ. "Wretched doll whom fools have worshipped!" he cried, and spat into the tranquil Face beneath the crown of thorns. It is well known how wit is sharpened by approval, and the workmen's rough laughter again inspired Berbistorf.

"Bring me that image of John," he called; and two score of eager hands obeyed him. The statue of the beloved Apostle was dragged from its resting-place against the shattered gates of the royal tomb of Bohemia.

"Here! lay the thing beside the woman Mary," cried Berbistorf; and as the willing, well-paid hirelings laid the statue next to that of the blessed Virgin, Berbistorf rolled the sculptured saint against Our Lady's statue, and laughing loud, cried out:

"Ye loved each other upon earth; there, I've put you together again so that ye may be free to love once more!"

There was a moment's silence wherein the clink of the metal rings which held the velvet hangings of the royal oratory window was clearly heard. Friedrich, King of Bohemia, had closed the curtain, and had disappeared from the sight of his supporters, who were doing such

glorious work for Bohemia and the Faith in the name of God.

Seeing that the King had fled before this insult to womanhood in the person of God's Blessed Mother, Scultetus smiled. Really, his Majesty was too faint-hearted; but it mattered not, he, Scultetus, was at hand to battle for the pure Faith of Calvin; and he, at least, would never waver, never recoil before God's service.

. . . . . .

The King left the royal oratory, and hurried through the long corridors of the rambling palace to the Queen's apartments. In the ante-chamber he met Count Schlick and Bernard Thurn. Both men were in the grip of strong emotion, and Schlick poured forth a stream of soft, swift Czech when he saw the king.

"Sire!" cried Thurn, silencing his voluble companion, for he remembered that Friedrich understood no word of Czech, "there is terrible work afoot in the Vitus Church! You cannot know what your preacher is doing, but, for God's sake, stop this sacrilege! It will turn the heart of every Bohemian against you. I implore you—" Friedrich stopped him with a haughty wave of his hand. "My young Lord of Thurn," he said coldly, "you are for ever trying to teach me my duty. You forget who I am, and also that I am an older man than you; you should learn respect for my riper experience!"

"You may be a hundred years older than I, sire," cried Thurn hotly, "but I know the Bohemian people as you cannot know them yet. The experience of one country is useless in another, and your German experience cannot aid you in Bohemia. There is no time to be lost, sire, I pray you—I pray you, stop this ruthless madman, who will wreck your kingdom——"

"Silence, sir! You speak of your superior in age and knowledge!" answered the King pompously. Thurn spoke to Schlick in Bohemian. The old man caught the King's arm, and addressed him in a choking voice. Friedrich looked at him. In spite of himself, he was impressed by Schlick's manner.

"Translate what the Count says," he ordered Thurn.

"Andreas Schlick tells your Majesty what each Bohemian will say in his heart to-day when he hears that our country is in the hands of a man who knows no reverence for Bohemia! Count Schlick says thus: 'The die is cast!'" Thurn replied sternly.

"You are traitors," began the King furiously,

"Nay, sire, we are no traitors; but we know that he who wounds the trust of Bohemians will receive but half-hearted service from them in his dire need," young Thurn said.

"Arrest this gentleman!" called the King to a guard, who stood at the door of the ante-chamber. Thurn unfastened his sword-belt, and, kneeling, presented his sword to Friedrich.

With one of those quick changes of mood to which the undecided are liable, the King pushed aside the proffered sword-hilt.

"Nay; you meant well. Keep your sword, and learn that you cannot browbeat a king," he said grandiloquently, and passed into the Queen's apartments.

"Alas, for Bohemia!" exclaimed Schlick. "We have chosen a pretty boy who can play at being king in a masquerade; but we wanted either a strong man to rule us, or a puppet to obey us. King Friedrich is neither of these, and Bohemia is doomed."

In the town of Prague the news of the wrecking of St. Vitus was received with strange indifference. It seemed as though Schlick and Thurn had miscalculated the people's love for their ancient church, and Friedrich, seeing this, felt himself the more secure, more than ever the master of his people. They had made no murmur against the enforcement of his will in this most vital thing. How should they? he argued, since, having chosen a Calvinist for their King, they must have always understood that, though as champion of religious freedom he would permit the Lutherans, the Bohemian Brethren, and even the few remaining Taborites to worship as they listed, no such leniency could be shown to Papists.

How could Friedrich know that he owed his people's calmness to the Domherren? He did not dream that the priests, gliding through the narrow streets, whispered patience to the people. Patience! for had not the Holy Father, the Pope himself, said that Friedrich was but a king of snows, like to the snow men that children built in winter, he and his dominion would melt away and vanish in a little time. The priests wished for no premature revolt, ending in bloodshed and ultimate submission. They waited, knowing that the Imperial army was still too far away to aid them; knowing right well, too, that Maximilian of Bavaria's disciplined troops would brush away like dust the feeble resistance of the ill-paid, underfed, half-hearted Bohemian army. But the time was not yet, and the priests bade the people to wait quietly, and they were obeyed; for though many to whom they spoke were Lutherans, from early youth they had known the priests, whereas the Calvinists were strangers to them. Also, the priests spoke to them in their own tongue—that soft, well-beloved language, of which, as the priests reminded the people, neither Friedrich, Elizabeth, nor their Court knew a single word.

With full confidence in himself and his prosperity, the King left Prague to visit his new dominions in Moravia and Silesia. He was accompanied by a fine retinue, and by Master Scultetus. It was a triumph to the preacher to journey thus through Silesia. He, the son of a Silesian peasant, could now exhibit himself to his compatriots as the nearest friend, the trusty adviser, the ruler of a king. King Friedrich tarried longer than arranged in Silesia, and, neglecting Lusatia, returned forthwith to Prague for the baptism of his infant son. Once more the Hradcány Palace was the scene of sumptuous banqueting and costly rejoicings. And, as a fresh mark of the Bohemians' confidence, the King's son was proclaimed Crown Prince of Bohemia, thus confirming the heredity of the Bohemian crown. The people desired the newly christened infant, Rupert, to be their Crown Prince; but in this, as in all else, they bowed to the King's will, and the

elder brother, Henry Friedrich, was recognised as heir-apparent.

Friedrich was complacent in his prosperity, and he wrote James I. a glowing account of the splendour of a Bohemian king, reassuring his father-in-law as to the stability of his crown, and praising his army—which he had not yet inspected.

The people of Prague were unwearied, it seemed, in paying homage to their King. Even the Jews gave proof of heartfelt loyalty, and one day in March a deputation from the Ghetto waited on their Majesties. A group of black-bearded men, clad in long black caftans and high black three-tiered hats, kneeled before the King and Queen, and presented her Majesty with a beautiful diadem which the skilled goldsmiths of the Prague Ghetto had wrought in finest gold and enriched with many diamonds and faultless pearls.

King Friedrich was disinclined to be gracious to the Jews; he considered them as an inferior people whom all good Christians had the duty to oppress, a swarming race which was, very properly, shut into a filthy, overpopulated quarter of all great cities; cringing creatures whom it was legitimate to tax heavily; otherwise he deemed them beneath the notice of any reputable German. But, for once, the Bohemian nobles succeeded in drowning Scultetus' voice and the dictates of German culture and custom, and it was explained to the King that the Jews of Prague had ever been allowed a freer existence. They had been permitted to hold services in their synagogue since the twelfth century, and at his Majesty's own royal entrance into Prague, and on the coronation day, they had even been allowed the honour of patrolling the streets with barrels of water strapped upon their shoulders to be used in the event of an outbreak of fire. So Friedrich received the Jews graciously, and deigned to accept from them, besides the diadem, a donation of ducats.

Slowly the winter left Bohemia, and spring came to icebound Prague. The gaieties at Court were more brilliant than ever. In the sixteenth-century "Hall of

Homage" there were almost daily grand banquets, and in the "German Hall" the courtiers danced each night. The English ladies were the queens of the revels. Graceful, young, sumptuously dressed, how could they be otherwise than a revelation of charm to the Bohemian gallants? Unwittingly they rendered their Queen a sorry service, for the neglected Bohemian ladies grew jealous, and like all jealous women they ascribed their foreign rivals' triumphs to unseemly conduct. Mistress Alison Hay dancing the couranto with my young Lord of Bustehrad, her fair face aflush with youth and gaiety, her satin bodice cut low to show her white neck and bosom, seemed to the envious Bohemian damsels, sitting unnoticed by the gallants, to be a very Phryne; and my Lady Phyllis Devereux, laughing behind her fan and whispering harmless jests to Wratislaw or to Duba, was to them a Circe enthralling the fickle hearts of men with evil wiles. Of course, the more sour the Bohemian ladies looked the less the gallants sought them in the dance, and the more brilliantly by contrast shone the foreign enchantresses. As for the Queen herself there were soon ugly rumours afloat anent her. Bernard Thurn was her enamoured slave. "Of course!" whispered the good dames, "as her Christel of Anhalt has gone to the army she needs must find another lover." Her Majesty's low-cut bodices evoked the disapproval of the Bohemian ladies. "Bare-breasted and light-mannered," they muttered to each other as the Queen passed them pacing the stately Pavyn. It did not mend matters that the Bohemian gentlemen were outspoken in their praise of the English ladies, or that they angrily repudiated their compatriots' insinuations concerning the Queen and her Court. Gradually the Bohemian ladies withdrew entirely from the Court in the Hradcány. To the royal commands they pleaded illness or fatigue or absence at their castles in the country. But what cared her Majesty? These dull creatures with their unmodish dress, their stuffy bodices high to the neck like to travelling or hunting corsages, their heavy, sullen faces and sour looks, were better away, her Majesty declared. She did not know how

full of fascination those heavy Czechish faces can be if a smile touches the lips and lights the brooding, sombre eyes.

But the Bohemian gallants were assiduous in their attendance at Court, and the revelry continued unabated.

By the end of May the sun beat down fiercely on Prague, and the burghers commenced their usual summer existence. The hostelries set out hundreds of little tables beneath gay-coloured awnings in the streets, and the city-bound populace feasted and made merry. In the cool of the evening an unending stream of loiterers paced the chief streets, and hung about in the squares, a laughing, chattering crowd. It was the custom for the people to bathe in the Moldau beneath the ancient bridge between the Two Cities, the "Old Town" and the "Small Side" of Prague. One stifling evening the King and a few German courtiers chanced to pass that way. Indolently Friedrich leaned over the bridge.

"How cool the water looks!" he said, "I would fain join those bathers!"

"Your Majesty could not bathe with such filthy rabble," cried Schomberg, aghast.

"They are not rabble, but my faithful citizens," returned the King. "I have a mind to go now, and show them that I am indeed their comrade!" In vain Schomberg protested; Friedrich was set upon it, and passing down to the river bank he undressed and sprang into the water. Like wildfire the news spread through the crowd of loiterers in the city: "The King bathes in the Moldau," and to Schomberg's annoyance he saw a stream of on-lookers gathering on the bridge, and he heard in their laughter both surprise and derision, though he could not understand the Czechish words.

At length the King left the water, and reclothed himself on the bank, the crowd laughing and jeering meanwhile. With flushed cheeks his Majesty rejoined Schomberg and the courtiers.

"I love my people to know that I am one of them," Friedrich said with pompous humility. Schomberg shook his head.

"See!" cried the King, "with what affection they greet me!" Bowing and smiling he passed through the crowd, in his ignorance of the language mistaking their mocking remarks and laughter for affectionate approval.

Once more Friedrich had shown his lack of understanding of his new people. In Germany, perhaps, his unwonted familiarity would have been counted as gracious condescension, but the Czechs loved that dignity and mystery which comes by the seclusion and aloofness of the great. The nobles would be disgusted by the thought of their King swimming about beside the barber and the apothecary, the tailor's apprentice and the butcher's lad, and the people themselves would jeer at the King. This young Thurn set forth to Schomberg on the return to the Hradcány, and never again did Friedrich bathe in the Moldau; but that one swim had been sufficient to lessen the Czechs' respect for their King. Also the gossip concerning the levity of the Court festivities spread from the noble dames' parlours to the burghers and populace. Unremittingly the Domherren worked to depict Friedrich and his Court as wanton triflers, and by the summer the flame of enthusiasm which had greeted the new King had died down and indifference or veiled hostility to the new monarchy grew apace.

Her Majesty Elizabeth knew nothing of the King's bathing exploit, for Friedrich, like most weak men, would liefer have confessed a crime to the woman he loved than have owned to an indiscreet blunder.

Elizabeth was happy in Prague. Sometimes she smiled when she recalled the grim menace which Captain Bell had revealed to her at the Heidelberg ball four years since. Then it had been held that, an she visited Prague, she would be the victim of murder; yet here she was Queen in the very palace where the Empress Anna, it had been said, would have done her to death. Ah! how foolish it had all been! How much easier, less complicated, less sombre was life than men's fancy painted it! All was well, had been well, would continue well, she told herself.

There came a rumour that Spanish troops under Spinola

menaced the Palatinate. What foolishness! Of course, they were on their way to the Spanish Netherlands. Had not Gondomer, the Spanish ambassador, assured King James that this was so?

"When an army is bound for a distant land, can it fly over an intervening country?" her Majesty cried when Friedrich and his advisers looked grave. How should the Spanish King dare to attack the lands of a Prince of the Protestant Union? He would not dare to violate all treaties, nor to risk the enmity of England, of Sweden, and of Denmark. It was absurd to be alarmed. Yet Juliane and the two little ones had best journey to Berlin to be out of possible harm's way. But her Majesty would not permit her Court to be turned into a collection of anxious-faced tremblers before this menace, which was probably no menace at all, as she said. Men are easily convinced of that which they wish to believe, and King Friedrich thrust aside his anxiety and plunged again into the gay Court life. He hunted and feasted, danced and made merry, and spoke enthusiastically of the future.

One brilliant summer morning their Majesties and their train rode from the Hradcány Palace down the steep lane beside the stag park wall towards the river. The Queen wore a flowing green-velvet robe embroidered with silver, a soft broad-brimmed brown felt hat with a sweeping plume, and richly embroidered gauntlets, and such was the mode adopted by the ladies who followed her. The King and his gallants, too, were attired for the chase in green velvet doublets slashed with silver, and soft beplumed felt hats. Behind the Court rode an army of huntsmen and stalwart falconers, bearing the hooded falcons chained to their wrists. The young birds which were not yet fully trained were carried by henchmen in green-cloth bags. The kennel-master and his men followed, with the graceful, eager coursers straining at their leashes and filling the air with sharp barks and yaps of pleasure.

The gallant company clattered along the narrow street, and passed on to the Karlsbrücke, the venerable fourteenth-century bridge built by the Emperor Charles IV. Here

was a hurrying crowd: peasants with empty barrows returning from the market, merchants in sober-coloured raiment hastening to their business, men-at-arms in their buff-leather tunics, heavy boots with the loose tops drawn high above the knee, and small, round, burnished helmets upon the undercaps of yellow leather; here, too, were many bearded Jews in their black caftans or gaberdines, and their high three-tiered hats, whence escaped the long black hair and the two carefully twisted oily curls, one behind each ear. An old woman, wrapped in filthy rags, crouched on the coping of the stone bridge balustrade, singing a monotonous wailing melody almost Eastern in its rhythm and its weird unusual intervals. It was a true Bohemian melody, wild and despairing, laden with all the luxury of sadness of the Slav soul. The Queen checked her horse an instant.

"Give her a golden piece, Schomberg," she called, "her song is so mournful 'twill ring in my ears for an hour." She rode on laughing carelessly. Beneath the bridge a multitude of unclothed men and women were splashing in the river, unsightly old harridans with withered breasts, and young women displaying their bodies with perfect unconcern—the thoughtlessness of old custom not of brazen indecency; men of all sorts, young and muscular like bronze statues, others old, sere, and yellow, with the flaccid flesh pendulous upon the gaunt framework of bone.

Elizabeth Stuart flushed angrily. "I have desired it to be arranged that these naked bathers should not be here when I pass over this bridge!" she cried. The King looked uncomfortable. After his own bathing exploit he had felt it difficult to forbid the people to bathe near the bridge.

"They are very harmless—" he began hesitatingly.

"They are very ugly!" retorted the Queen. "I will not have these naked bathers near the bridge; I will never pass this way till they are removed." As she spoke the cavalcade rode past the ancient crucifix on the centre of the bridge. A thin-faced man in a priest's shabby cassock stood near and heard the Queen's words. She had spoken in French.

Gaily the hunting-party rode through the Old Town and out into the forest beyond the city, and, in the amusement of the hawking and coursing, Elizabeth soon forgot her temporary annoyance.

Master Scultetus had not accompanied their Majesties that day, he had a more congenial task in hand. The preceding evening he had received the King's permission for the destruction of the crucifix on the Emperor Charles' Bridge, and that day he repaired to the town councillors to convey his Majesty's commands for the removal of the idolatrous image. To his surprise he found the city authorities stubborn in their refusal to carry out these orders. The crucifix was an ancient landmark, an historic relic of Bohemia's beloved Emperor Charles IV.; the people would rise in revolt if it were removed. They assured Master Scultetus that it would be unwise to pull down this cross, they begged him to spare it; but the preacher insisted, and high words passed in the Rathaus. Finally the authorities definitely refused to order the removal of the crucifix, and Scultetus returned to the Hradcány Palace to brood over his rebuff. He decided that it would be best not to acquaint the King of this embroglio. His Majesty was both weak and lenient, and might order the Bohemians' cherished cross to be spared.

While Scultetus was pondering, and their Majesties were enjoying the hawking, a thin-faced man in a shabby cassock was despatching some fifty priests through the streets of Prague on a special mission. This mission was merely the repeating of two sentences: "Father Wladislas heard the Queen order the destruction of the great crucifix. She said she would never ride over the bridge until the naked bather—so she called the Christ on the Cross—had been removed." Into a hundred stifling alleys, up many steep, dingy staircases, into burgher's house and poor man's hovel, the priestly emissaries passed, delivering their message without comment.

On the morrow at dawn a band of workmen repaired to the Karlsbrücke. They were met by a host of defiant men who asked their business. The workmen replied that by

the King's command they had come to take down the crucifix. Calmly the spokesman of the rabble, a thin-faced man, clad in a sober-coloured tunic, answered that the first worker who laid his chisel to the crucifix would be a dead man ere the church clocks tolled the hour again. The hirelings slunk away. Silently the crowd on the bridge waited. Hour after hour they stood in the blazing sun guarding the crucifix. Late in the afternoon the city authorities appeared and informed the crowd that his Majesty had reconsidered his decision, and the crucifix would remain where it had stood for three hundred years.

The people had won a victory over their King, but, as the priests reminded them, the light-minded Queen had vowed never to pass over the bridge till the "Naked Bather" was removed. They must watch whether she had repented of her impious saying. If she rode as usual over the bridge it would denote that she was penitent, but if she avoided it they might know that she adhered to her blasphemous vow.

CHAPTER XII

THE KING'S VISION

"Oh, blindness to the future, kindly given,
That each may fill the circle marked by heaven;
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world."—POPE.

FIERCELY the sun glared down on the city of Prague, and the Moldau became a mere thread between shelving banks of reeking mud, while a stale, sickly stench rose from the dirty streets. Elizabeth Stuart remained in the fresher air of the palace gardens on the crest of the Hradcín hill. For the most part, when she rode out she took her way across the White Mountain to the stag park around the Star Palace. Once or twice she rode to the Karlstein fortress in the hills, and young Thurn proudly showed her Bohemia's glory, as he called the castle, with its tier upon tier of cyclopic walls. He showed her, too, the heavy stones which the besieging Hussites had flung into the fortress, but he boasted that Karlstein had never been captured. Only treachery could open the gates to an enemy, he said.

"How now, sir!" cried her Majesty, laughing. "This castle is to be garrisoned by a troop of English gentlemen who have volunteered in my service. You will not dare to suggest that my countrymen could be traitors?"

"Nay, madame. I do not know these English gentlemen. An it comes to warfare in this country, I trust them to match our Czechish bravery," he answered courteously.

Her Majesty did not share Thurn's enthusiasm for Karlstein, she vowed it was too strong to be alluring, and that

she felt melancholy steal over her in that grim mountain scenery. The Star Palace was more to her liking, and thither she repaired almost daily. Thus she avoided the pestilential smells of the sun-baked city and the ugly sight of the naked bathers in the Moldau, for although the river was so poor in water, the townsfolk adhered to their custom, and splashed in dozens in the muddy water.

During the summer it was rumoured in Prague that the Hungarian crown would be offered to King Friedrich, the adventurer Bethlem Gabor, Prince of Transylvania, having refused the honour of the throne of Hungary. Though Friedrich affected to consider this an absurd rumour, still he was flattered thereby. His confidence in himself and his splendid destiny was increased, and when a few weeks later the news came that Gabor had, after all, accepted the Hungarian crown, his Majesty was visibly disappointed.

One brilliant late August afternoon the King and Queen and their Court rode along the crest of the White Mountain to the Star Palace. The dust lay thick on the narrow road, and the scant grass on the long, low hill hardly showed against the grey of the arid chalky soil.

"The White Mountain justifies its name to-day," said Elizabeth as she rode along.

"'Tis dreary enough," replied the King gloomily. He was in one of his sombre moods that day, and the feast at the Star Palace had been designed by her Majesty to cheer him from his ill-humour.

They drew near to the park. Here all was fresh and cool; the air was fragrant with the resinous scent of the fir-trees and a gentle breeze stirred the branches. Her Majesty's jennet broke into a canter, and the troop of courtiers followed laughing and chattering. They dismounted at the gate of the Pavilion.

"Ah! how cool and sweet!" cried Elizabeth, as she entered the centre hall. "And what have we here to entertain us?" she added, for from out a room, which formed one of the points of the star, floated a strain of music.

"I have made bold, your Majesty, to order these musicians to play," said young Thurn, "it is a wandering

French troupe, and I deemed they might wile away an hour for you." Her Majesty smiled approval. In Heidelberg she had often been amused by travelling minstrels or playactors, for these itinerant French or English mimes wandered from Court to Court in Germany and Italy. Especially the English playactors were frequent visitors, and thus were Shakespeare's plays, Ben Jonson's masks, and even Beaumont and Fletcher's crude dramas, made familiar in many lands. But Bohemia was a far-off country, beyond the route of these wanderers. Probably the Frenchmen had beguiled the tedium of the camps alike of Bucquoi, of Mansfeld in Pilsen, and of the chief Bohemian army on the borders of Lower Austria, and now had even penetrated to Prague.

Elizabeth Stuart hailed with delight the advent of something new, for albeit she had made merry in Prague she had been keenly aware of the stagnation which always broods over the cities which lie far from the main stream of life. Through Heidelberg travellers had ridden on their road from north to south, but who should journey through Prague?

"Bid your musicians sing the newest romances of France," the Queen cried, as she sat down to the repast which was laid out in the central hall.

The French minstrels sang a few amorous conceits, and a many free political ballads, absurd songs about the Concinis with rough puns on their title, such as that the Court of France was white as snow now that l'Encre (Concini had been created Marquis d'Ancre) had been removed, a grim jest enough when we remember how Marie de Medici's favourite had been brutally done to death, but the Bohemian Court laughed at the song, so all was well. There were pasquinades against Louis XIII. and his Duc de Luynes, and mention of an intriguing priest, a Bishop of Luçon; again puns: "Ce Richelieu a quitté ce riche lieu de Paris," and so on; all the swift mocking wit of Parisian song—gay, light, diverting. Meanwhile King Friedrich and the courtiers discussed the news of the world.

"I hear our cousin of Brunswick would fain leave mine uncle Maurice's service and join us in Bohemia," the King said after a time.

"A fine soldier 'tis said," answered Dohna, who sat near the Queen, "but so wild and evil of life that he devastates a province more than a whole army."

"Is it he who at Haarlem threw the intruding husband out of the man's own lawful bedchamber window?" asked a Bohemian noble.

"Ah! sir," cried the King, laughing, "has that little history travelled so far? Yes, it is Christian of Brunswick who did that, so the story runs." And now the whole company fell to talking of the "mad Halberstädter," as Duke Christian was called, from his possession as Administrator or Lay Bishop of the See of Halberstadt.

Her Majesty sat silent; during the last few months she had heard a plethora of sorry tales concerning her close kinsman, and a strong distaste for him had grown up in her mind. She well remembered his kindly sister Sophie, Countess of Nassau, who had been so friendly to her in Holland on the journey from England to Heidelberg some seven years since. Also Elizabeth had been told that this evildoer's mother—her own aunt, the Duchess Elizabeth of Brunswick—had near broke her heart over her son's riotous way of living.

"Is my cousin of Brunswick coming to Prague?" her Majesty interrupted suddenly. Friedrich was laughing loudly at some broad anecdote which Dohna had told in Latin. The King turned to Elizabeth.

"Your pardon, ma mie, I did not hear what you said?" he queried.

"I asked if you would permit this evil kinsman of mine to come to Prague?" she repeated.

"Why not, madame? Are you afraid for your damsels' honour?" said the King lightly.

"Indeed, sire, we should welcome a new gallant! I warrant he would behave well enough to us; we are not like the foolish Mevrouws and Fräules of Holland!" cried my Lady Phyllis Devereux.

"Be silent, Phyllis!" commanded her Majesty. "The Halberstädter is no subject for the talk of an honest maid." A silence fell on the company for an instant, and the French singers burst forth once more into a gay ditty which told of virtuous ladies resisting love. Each couplet recounted the delicious defeat of womanly resistance to the lordship of passion, and finished with the refrain:—

"Inustiles sont appastz
Si parfaictz et délicatz
Parfumés dans leurs atours!
Vaine est ceste beauté
Si oncques n'avez gousté
Puyssans et vrays amours."

"So says the Halberstädter too, ma reine!" cried Friedrich, laughing.

"Such men do not know the meaning of 'Puyssans et vrays amours.' As our own poet, Master Shakespeare, hath it: 'Call it not Love, for Love to heaven is fled, since sweating Lust on earth usurp'd his name,'" she answered.

"Ah! learnèd Queen!" said Friedrich merrily. "What can a poor wight such as I answer to so erudite a lady?" The Queen rose.

"'Tis time to leave our lords when they are bestowing that pitying praise to woman's wit which nearly always means, methinks, that in the argument the kings of the world have been a trifle worsted!"

The laughing company broke up, and the ladies and gallants wandered away into the park. Elizabeth Stuart and the King lingered near the gate. The Queen spoke of the strangeness of a pavilion being thus strongly fortified.

"There is something sombre in the thought that even this place, meant for alfresco feasts and courtly gaiety, must needs be girt by such ponderous walls," she said musingly.

"We will pull down these frowning defences, dear heart, an it pleases you," replied King Friedrich, "and I will have flowering parterres planted here next spring. We will send for good Maître De Caus, and he shall make

a paradise of flowers here for you. 'Roses red and roses white, growing for my love's delight,' as Mistress Alison Hay's old Scotch song saith." They fell to talking of Heidelberg and their beloved garden. Ah, well! next year Master De Caus should turn the Hradcány gardens into a marvel of beauty.

"An we be not attacked by the Emperor ere then," said Elizabeth with sudden anxiety.

"Nay, there may be a short campaign on the borders of Lower Austria," he answered reassuringly, "but Bucquoi, as heretofore, will always hesitate to attack us. Here we are safe enough, for our army is between us and our undecided foes. I have no fear for the future." He took her hand and kissed the delicate palm gently. "The future! Ah! the present is enough for me!" he murmured amorously.

A great stillness lay over the summer evening, and the air was heavy with the scent of the sun-kissed fir groves. Already the shadows of the trees fell in ever-lengthening shapes upon the clipped grass between the wood and the pavilion, and the dying sun shone in a glory upon the Queen as she stood gazing out towards the west.

"Such wondrous peace!" she said dreamily. "Some day when you are Emperor of all the Protestant lands, I shall retreat to the Star Palace and console my old age with the memory of our happy days together," she spoke jestingly.

"You would leave me, sweet heart of mine?" he queried.

"Ah! Never! never!" she answered, suddenly serious. "My poor child-lover! how could I leave you while you needed me?"

"And I shall always need you," he said. "Without you I am nothing!" She smiled tenderly, yet in her heart she wearied because, she being always the stronger one in all relations of life, she would have loved to be weak; she was too strong to rest, and she knew it would be so infinitely restful to be weak—sometimes.

"The shadows grow, dear my lord," she said. "We must ride back to Prague. Already the dew is falling. See!" And lifting her green velvet riding-skirt a little, she showed him how its hem was wet and how the silver braid glittered with the dew.

They returned to the pavilion, and the huntsman in attendance blew a shrill blast upon his horn to summon the ladies and their gallants back from their wanderings. Like a flight of birds of gay plumage the ladies hurried back to the Star Palace.

"Back to Prague already?" cried my Lady Phyllis; "but, madame, 'tis mighty pleasant here!"

"The dew is falling, my lady; 'tis high time we were on the road," said Amalia Solms primly, though she, too, had been making merry and her fair, heavy face was aglow with laughter.

"One more draught of sack, mesdames!" called the King gaily. "A stirrup-cup to sustain us on the ride homeward."

"Let us go up to the western turret and see how beautiful the White Mountain looks in the red glow of the setting sun!" cried my young Lord of Bustehrad.

"Well said, my lord!" laughed Elizabeth Stuart. "Come! we will see this pretty sight while the lackeys prepare the goblets for our stirrup-cup."

The whole company trooped up the broad, shallow steps to the first floor of the pavilion. Here the western windows glittered like fiery jewels in the glory of the sunset. From below came the lilt of a song which the French minstrels had struck up as envoi to this gay feast.

"A galliard! A galliard!" called the Queen. "Tell them to play us a galliard tune; we will have one dance ere the sun sets!" Young Thurn hurried to give the order to the musicians, and right merrily the melody rang out. In the rosy light of the dying sun the gems flashed as the ladies bowed and pirouetted. It was a graceful throng of happy youths and maidens, clad almost alike in green velvet and silver braiding. They seemed a troupe of play-actors personating the Hunter's Dance at some masquerade. There was much laughter, much light jesting.

Elizabeth Stuart only trod a short measure and then retired from the dance. She leaned against the carven pillar of the open fireplace and watched the dancers, calling to them gaily not to be so quickly weary, or to dance more swiftly. Presently the King, too, disengaged himself from the dancing company.

"The night falls apace," he said to the Queen. "We must soon end your impromptu ball, ma mie." In truth, the sun's glow was fading and the casement-panes gleamed golden instead of ruby red.

The King went to the window and stood silent. Suddenly Elizabeth heard him utter a stifled cry. In an instant she was beside him.

"What ails you?—Friedrich?—why did you cry out?" she said; but he made no answer, his eyes were fixed, as if in horror, on the silent ridge of the White Mountain. His cheek had grown deathly pale, and his white lips moved as though he counted some advancing enemy.

"Friedrich—Friedrich—what is it?" the Queen cried, and caught his arm.

One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. The jigging rhythm of the galliard rang on, and the swish of skirts, the quick sound of dancing feet beat time merrily.

"Friedrich—beloved! What ails thee?" she cried again. Now with shaking finger he pointed at the deserted hill-land, lying dreaming there in the last rays of the dying sun.

"They fly!—one—all!—like madmen—throwing their muskets away—there the men-at-arms—see! Ah! the riders—all—all———"

"Friedrich! thou art mad! Oh! for the dear God's sake, stop the galliard!" she called wildly. "Cease! Do you not see that the King is ill?" But the dancers did not hear her; they were full of their own mirth, and the music and the laughter drowned the Queen's voice; only Amalia Solms, who had fallen out of the galliard—Amalia Solms, faithful and inquisitive—came to her side.

"What has befallen madame? What is—" she began, but her sentence trailed away before the anguish in the

King's face. He stood, like one bereft of reason, pointing at the silent, deserted country.

"More—they fly! The banners are thrown down—the horses struggle—God in heaven! not one company steadfast!—Yes—yes! one company fights—they are coming hither, to the Star Palace!—Oh! merciful Jesu! they are trampled down—" the words came haltingly from his blanched lips, yet he told of this horror as one who, watching from a tower, sees a battle deployed before him.

Ever faster rang out the tripping measure of the galliard. The Queen leaned beside the King, gazing through the casement into the gathering gloom, at that still hill-land, where she perceived nothing save the infinite calm of the ending of a summer's day—but where he saw this terrible vision of a degraded army flying in craven panic.

The galliard ended with a triumph of brisk chords from the stringed instruments, and the dancers, laughing and breathless, made their final bows. Then seeing the King and Queen at the window they gathered round.

"How good a thought 'twas of your Majesty's to have us dance the galliard!" cried Mistress Alison.

"Indeed, 'twas best of all this bright day!" said my Lady Phyllis. "But, madame!" she added anxiously, as the Queen turned to her with blanched cheeks and anguished eyes, "what ails your Majesty?"

"Nothing, child," said Elizabeth Stuart, seeing curious looks on all the faces around her, "I am right well, but the King has had a dizzy fit. Open the window, Amalia, and—forgive me, my friends, but I think 'twere kinder an you left us alone for a while. A moment's quiet will restore his Majesty." There was much dignity in Elizabeth Stuart's mien just then—commanding, courteous, calm; though her voice was a trifle unsteady and her bosom rose and fell as if she had been running.

The courtiers withdrew silently, only Amalia Solms lingered. "I pray you, if you love me, friend," the Queen whispered, "say no word of this. The King was giddy from the heat, that is all." Amalia bowed her head and went out.

The King still stood motionless, gazing into the deepening twilight. Amalia Solms had pushed open one side of the window, and a cool breath of air wafted in the fragrance of the summer evening.

"Friedrich," said the Queen in a low voice, "you have dreamed an ugly dream. It is some fantasy of an overwrought brain. You are weary, beloved, and have dreamed." She laid her arm round him, and leaned her cheek against his shoulder.

"I saw it—God in heaven! You would not have me think myself mad? I tell you I saw my army in full flight!" he said hoarsely.

"God gave prophetic illumination to His saints of old," she answered; "He sends no miraculous visions to man to-day. No, you are not mad," she even laughed a little, though she was trembling, "I saw what you saw——"

"You saw it too, then?" he cried. "Ah! thank God!"

"Hush," she said soothingly, "I saw a mighty black cloud over the White Mountain, and on the bare hill those few stunted trees, which, in the half-light, look like hurrying figures—Friedrich, there was nothing else! Believe me. Ah! dearling, when have I ever spoken untruth to you?"

"What did I see, then?" he asked, like a wondering child willing to be consoled, a child who is pathetically eager to have the spectre which frightened it shown to be but a foolish delusion.

"You are weary—overwrought with working at State matters, and your own mind tricked you out a seeming vision. From a cloud and a few stunted trees you made a flying army. Look again—the cloud is still there, and the twisted trees on the gaunt hillside." The King gazed out.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I see—it was nothing—I have dreamed!"

She led him away down the broad winding staircase to the central hall where the courtiers waited with anxious faces.

"The King is well again!" Elizabeth cried gaily.

"'Twas nothing, only a moment's dizziness from the heat. And now the stirrup cup; I pledge you all! Health and happiness!" She took the golden goblet, proffered by Thurn on bended knee.

"Health and happiness!" she cried again, "and I drink to our next galliard in the Star Palace."

Right merrily they rode back to Prague. Never had the King been more debonnair, more gay and full of jest and laughter, and Elizabeth Stuart had never seemed more carelessly happy. Once she turned in her saddle and looked back. A red glow as of blood seemed to lurk behind the gathering blue of night over the Star Palace.

"A wild sky," she said lightly. "Strange that after so bright a day the evening should hold so fierce a menace. Methinks it is our last ride to the Star Palace for a time."

That night brought riders to Prague, the one a bearer of despatches from Germany, the other a messenger from France. The German letters informed the King that the Princes of the Protestant Union, hearing that Bethlem Gabor had concluded an armistice with the Emperor, had signed at Ulm a treaty with Maximilian of Bavaria, the head of the Catholic League. By this treaty the Protestant Princes undertook neither to oppose the Imperial army in Germany, nor to aid the rebellion against the Emperor in Bohemia. In return Maximilian promised that the Imperial troops would respect the neutrality of these Protestant rulers' domains, including the Palatinate. The same messenger, however, brought the news that Spinola and his twenty-five thousand Spaniards had commenced hostilities in the Palatinate, and were marching on Heidelberg.

The French messenger brought a letter from Louis XIII. wherein Friedrich's proferred alliance was answered by the assurance of the French monarch's friendly feelings towards him and his family, but that his Majesty declared himself unable to espouse a cause so closely allied to that of the turbulent French Huguenots. He promised to send

an embassy to Austria to endeavour to effect a reconciliation between the Emperor and the Bohemian King. In case of the failure of this negotiation he owned himself bound by State expediency to assist the Emperor in the war.

King Friedrich of Bohemia, thus forsaken by his brethren of the Union and by his Hungarian ally, and thus politely refused by France, stood alone before the giant powers of Europe; but he was still buoyed up by the careless confidence of youthful inexperience, and he faced calmly a situation which might well have inspired terror and despair in any man, however brave, who had realised the overwhelming strength of the forces arraigned against him. Friedrich relied upon his army, that army which he had never hitherto inspected, that unpaid, ill-armed, semi-mutinous, half-starved conglomeration of soldiery, captained by inexperienced leaders.

Thus it fell out that on the day after the merry-makings at the Star Palace, King Friedrich set forth to join his troops in Southern Bohemia. In the excitement and exhilaration of enterprise, applauded by the woman he loved for his warlike enthusiasm, he forgot the grim warning of that vision on the White Mountain.

. . . . . .

The menace of that wild sky which had lowered over the Star Palace was fulfilled, and day after day rain fell in torrents over Prague. The Moldau, swelled to angry, turbid grandeur, rushed, a frothy, yellow stream beneath the slate-like uniformity of gloom in the sullen heavens.

Elizabeth Stuart set herself to wait. In her gilded parlour in the Hradcány she sat hour after hour before her embroidery frame, she wrote many loving letters to her King, she read, she played with Jacky the monkey. Her ladies grew weary and dispirited. Dulness is hard to bear when we are young; but the Queen remained resolute in her cheerfulness in spite of physical heaviness, for she was again enceinte.

The King wrote that he deemed it fortunate he had joined his army so promptly, for he had found dissension

and disorder which, of course, he doubted not he could put right immediately. The generals themselves were dissatisfied, but chiefly each complained of the undue advancement in rank which had been accorded to his compeers. Mansfeld, still sulking in Pilsen, had sent a request which was practically an insolent demand to be named Field-marshal. Thurn claimed that as he had led the army for many months he could not be called by a lesser title than Mansfeld, and certainly he refused to be subordinate to Hohenlohe, who also was created Field-marshal. Solms considered that his dignity forbade him to be second in command under Mansfeld, even though the latter, in point of fact, being mewed up in Pilsen took no part in the operations of the main army. Old Christian of Anhalt stormed and raged and quoted at length every writer on military tactics, but this did not mend matters. The King solved the question with the greatest ease. He made Mansfeld, Thurn, Schlick, Hohenlohe, Solms, all General Field-marshals, and gave them absolute command over their troops, of course, all under old Christian of Anhalt, commander-in-chief.

On paper the Bohemian army was indeed formidable, and counted over twenty-one thousand men; but such small accidents as the death of several hundred soldiers from disease, or the casualties arising from a dozen skirmishes, had not been noted for many months—and this for a most excellent reason; for, as each general drew from Prague the payment per head for his soldiers, it was natural that the absence, by death or desertion, of a soldier was a substantial pecuniary gain for the general. Also every commander drew double, and sometimes triple and quadruple pay, for one and the same man was often general of an army corps, colonel of a regiment, and captain of a company.

Old Anhalt, honest and incapable, full of long speeches on the theory of warfare, thoroughly versed in the writings of military strategians, was helpless before this embroglio; and when, in the councils of war, the generals quarreled and abused each other, the old Duke only added to the

uproar by thundering commands for obedience and order. Christel of Anhalt and several of the younger men, seeing the hopelessness of achieving universal order in this unruly army, had laboured only to perfect their own regiments. And the sight of these few well armed, carefully trained troops again inspired the King with confidence. Like the inexperienced stage-manager of a company of unprofessional playactors, he believed that the mistakes of the rehearsal would vanish automatically when the real drama was played.

Yet he wrote to implore the Queen to seek a surer refuge than Prague. Warfare was a strange, capricious playmate, and he would fain know his beloved to be far off from any possible danger.

Over the tedious life at the Hradcány this warning lowered like another cloud. What! was there danger as well as dulness? the ladies cried, but Elizabeth Stuart silenced them with proud words. If they feared danger let them begone; she, for her part, would remain in Prague. All had been well and would be well.

They came and told the Queen that the people in the city were beginning to murmur. They said that there was anxiety, nay, fear in the Hradcány Palace. It was whispered that the Queen was preparing for flight. Ah! where had vanished the gay doings, the masquerades, and dancing, they asked mockingly? The Queen was stricken with terror; they had heard it from the lackeys; all the town knew it.

"I! stricken with terror? God's life! they know me ill!" cried the Queen; and her ladies remembered how it had been said that the dauntless spirit of Elizabeth of England often flashed up in the manner of her god-child Elizabeth Stuart.

So once more the Hradcány rang with the merry strains of the galliard and the pavyn, and, albeit there were few gallants to take part in the figures, the ladies danced together and gaiety seemed to have returned to the Bohemian Court. Of course, the citizens professed themselves disgusted at such levity, when battle and pillage were so

near, but unwittingly they were reassured thereby, for if the Queen was thus confident, surely there could be no grave cause for anxiety.

Then a rumour spread in Prague that Prince Hal had been secretly conveyed away. She feared for her child, then, this Queen who feared naught for herself? There was tumult in the city, and a mob surged up to the castle gates.

Elizabeth Stuart bid the guards let in the crowd. She met them alone, unguarded save by her bevy of ladies; and standing beneath the portico of the Emperor's building, she lifted the baby Rupert in her arms to show them that she had not feared for him. Then she made a Bohemian gentleman translate these words: "The Queen bids you be of good cheer; for, though she does not keep all her jewels in one casket, yet she must have every confidence in the safety of that treasury where she trusts this dear jewel of hers."

She made a grand picture standing there beneath the sculptured stone portico. She wore no hat; there were pearls and diamonds in her auburn hair. Her gown, as usual, was of viol-brown satin, her filmy lace ruff framed her delicate proud face with the haunting Stuart smile on the fresh lips and in the great sombre eyes.

The rabble shouted in the enthusiasm which her proud, fearless beauty inspired, shouted until the baby Rupert, affrighted, raised a wailing cry. Then the Queen kissed him, and laughing, drew back into the Palace. And the rabble returned to the Old Town roaring songs of loyalty.

"Wait!" said the Domherren, gliding among them. "She has never crossed the Karls Bridge again. There are no more bathers to disgust her; the only one is the Naked Bather on the Cross. Him she will not pass! Perchance she will yet be driven by the Imperial troops over the bridge."

Sullenly the populace waited through the dreary, wet autumn days. For the Czech, like most Slavs, is a being at once fiery and apathetic. He can be stirred to a very flame of effort, be delirious with enthusiasm, and then suddenly he will sink into a condition of hopeless despair,

a state of mind wherein he will nurse his melancholy and enjoy it. He is a man full of poetry, idealistic as a young girl, fantastic, enthusiastic—yet sensuous, ease-loving, fatalistic, unstable, capable of a sudden indifference which he masks to his own vision by his poetic melancholy, excusing his changes of mood by haunting suspicions which he has not the energy to dispel by investigation.

Elizabeth Stuart mistook the apathy of the Praguers; she believed their indifference to be calm steadfastness, and she wrote to the King that their citizens were quiet, confident, and loyal. Nevertheless, she ordered the continuance of such gaieties as were possible in that Court bereft of gallants, for she deemed that hereby the people's sense of security would be maintained.

In spite of these seeming gaieties the cloud of anxiety in the Hradcány Palace grew darker, and, though her Majesty professed to be confident in the Bohemian army's ultimate success, the relentless advance of the Imperial forces into Bohemia made even her brave heart quail with apprehension. True, it was known that in the Imperial army there reigned discord between the Generals Maximilian of Bavaria and Bucquoi; also that the invaders were constantly delayed by the tardy arrival of the provision carts from Austria and Bavaria. Further came the good news that the greater number of the courtiers who had followed Maximilian from Bavaria, finding the prevalence of illness and the discomfort of camp-life little to their taste, had withdrawn from their Duke's side and had returned to Munich. But all this, though of course agreeable hearing for the Court of Prague, did not hinder the inexorable forward march of the allied army. Budweis had capitulated with astounding alacrity; seven thousand men were marching across the Bohemian Forest from Bavaria to reinforce Maximilian; three thousand fresh troops were reported to be on the way from Würzburg to join the invaders, the Elector of Saxony held Lusatia; and from Poland reinforcements were hurrying to the Imperialists. Alas! the invading host was like a river fed by a hundred streams, gathering

volume as it rolled irresistibly onward, whereas the Bohemian army was a stagnant lake into which no fresh water flowed.

Then came tidings that Mansfeld was in treasonable communication with Duke Maximilian; it was whispered that a hundred thousand florins had changed hands—and that Mansfeld would remain neutral in Pilsen.

Passionately her Majesty cried out she did not credit such villainy, but the brave words died on her lips when she remembered how Mansfeld had always appeared to her a harbinger of ill-omen; already on that night in Heidelberg when she had seen him slink into the castle, it had seemed to her that there was some menace to her life's joy in this misshapen, sturdy, sombre condottiere.

Mansfeld explained his conduct to the King. He pretended that his apparent treason was but a ruse to gain time. Fiercely old Anhalt demanded the dismissal of the dishonest adventurer and the substitution of another leader for the Pilsen division; yet Mansfeld succeeded in convincing Friedrich, who believed that personal animosity prompted Anhalt.

Slowly but inexorably the Imperial army swept onwards. The small township of Pisek was taken, neither man, woman, nor child was spared; unutterable horrors were perpetrated; like demons the mercenary soldiers rioted in a very fury of blood-lust, rejoicing in the ghastly shambles they had made of the little city. The Cossacks, as the people called the Poles, were matched in their delirium of cruelty by the raging of Bucquoi's own men. Steadily the Imperialists advanced. Then towards the middle of October the Bohemians saw their country covered by a vast white mantle. An early fall of snow had come to their rescue. Surely the invaders would retreat; for, cut off from Bavaria and Austria by the deep snowdrifts in the hills, they would not risk a winter of starvation. For an instant even Maximilian wavered. Bucquoi counselled retreat.

One night of sudden rain, and the snow vanished, leaving sodden fields and dripping swamps, desolation

and added misery for both armies. But there was nothing now to hinder the invaders from their career of rapine and devastation, nothing save the Bohemian army.

There had been many skirmishes, sometimes won by the Imperialists, sometimes by the Bohemians, but no actual battle had taken place. The commanders of both armies hung back, advanced, avoided each other, deployed, in fact amused themselves by showing off what experienced strategians they all were according to the rules of theoretic warfare. The Bohemian generals believed that the Imperialists meant to continue this dilatory game, and it was only towards the end of October when the entire enemy, raising camp, commenced forced marches towards Prague, that Christian of Anhalt and King Friedrich realised Maximilian's intention. Promptly the Bohemians drew together, and succeeded in blocking the invader's way. A decisive battle seemed imminent. The Bohemians held Rakonitz and a long rise of wooded ground, a splendid position offering little inducement for the Bavarians to attack. Nevertheless they stormed the hill, but were easily repulsed and fled in disorder.

The following day a heavy mist prevented either army from taking action; but on the 30th of October, the mist having cleared, a sharp engagement took place, and as Christian of Anhalt considered his possession of the hill unimportant, the Bohemians retreated in good order towards Prague, and took up a commanding position on the rise of a wooded slope.

In the Imperial camp it was recognised that their enemy, though they could claim no victory, had at least scored a strategic success by succeeding in retreating to so strong a position. Bucquoi had been severely wounded during a reconnoitring expedition; also the provision-waggons from the south not having arrived, it was determined to abandon the projected immediate advance on Prague.

It was now that King Friedrich resolved upon returning to the Hradcány Palace for a few days. The enemy seemed paralysed by indecision; the Bohemian army was in a dominant position; all was well and would be well.

He had heard that Ambassadors from James of England had arrived in Prague, and—he had not seen Elizabeth Stuart for over two months.

. . . . . .

There was rejoicing and gaiety in the Hradcány Palace, the King brought a train of young gallants with him, and once more merriment reigned supreme. Yet her Majesty regretted the absence of Ritter Christel, of young Thurn, and Magnus of Wirtemberg.

"They could not leave their companies, dearling," the King said.

"Is there danger, then?" she cried. "If we are indeed threatened, why are you here, dear my lord?"

"Nay, there is no risk," he answered. "The enemy has been repulsed. Bucquoi will make a feint of attack, and according to his custom, and the usage of warfare, he will then retreat into a well-ordered camp for the winter. By the spring all will be arranged peacefully, and we will summon Master De Caus to make our gardens fair! Your Christel, Thurn, and the rest of your Majesty's mighty army of devout lovers shall return, and we will have a merry Court."

They were standing together at the window of the Queen's withdrawing-room, overlooking the Stag Park. The swallows flew and circled in the still air, uttering their sharp, quick notes. Below clustered the roofs of palaces and burghers' dwellings, and deep in the valley the Moldau surged in sullen grandeur. The sun had won through the clouds for an hour, and had gilded the old town in the distance to the likeness of a magic city.

"It seems as though the clouds were banished from us," the Queen said; "you have brought back sunshine with you, Friedrich. Ah! I was weary of the o'er-darkened days!"

"Yes," he answered, "our time of anxiety is almost past—the enemy will melt away before our army like the clouds before the sunrays. Kiss me, dear heart!" he whispered. "Ah! life is full of happiness, and the future is like a radiant dream to me!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN

"Dreimal unselig Volk, dein Leid
Bewegt kein Herz mehr, dass es weine.
Es ist ein Leid aus alter Zeit
Und gleicht bemoostem Leichensteine.

. . . . . .

Ruhmlos zieht durch die Welt dein Gram."

IT was Saturday night, the 7th of November. The moon shone white and wan over the drenched hill-land where lay the Bohemian army. A sudden advance of the Imperial forces had made Maximilian of Bavaria's intent clear to old Christian of Anhalt; he had at length realised that the Imperialists were bent upon pushing forward to Prague itself. By forced marches the Bohemians had succeeded in outreaching the enemy. By detours over rough, marshy ground, and through dense fir-woods, Duke Christian had led his men, outskirting the Imperialists, who marched on the main road direct towards Prague. Now the two armies faced each other, the Bohemians on the crest of the White Mountain, the enemy below in the valley. Duke Christian had scored another strategic success, for not only had the Bohemians the advantage of their position on the higher ground, but the small river, the Scharka, with its surrounding swamps, formed a natural barrier between them and the Imperialists. But the Bohemian soldiers, badly fed, ill paid, meagrely clothed, insufficiently armed, were worn out by the fatigue of those two days and nights of strenuous advance, and on this Saturday night they slept like dead men beneath the moonlight. The camp-fires burnt low; the sentries moved wearily on their beats; damp, chill mists rose from the valley where fitfully the enemy's fires twinkled.

Not six miles away the King made merry in Prague—not six miles, and yet the city was absolutely cut off from the army. A messenger whom Duke Christian had sent imploring for ammunition, for clothing for the shivering soldiery, and for fresh rations, had returned saying that it was almost impossible to win through the disorder of the baggage column which had been sent on to seek safety nearer Prague. The city gates were closed.

The night wore on. That abiding terror, the expectation of a sudden onslaught of yelling hordes of Cossacks, had not come to disturb the deathlike stillness of the Bohemian camp. The weary outposts saw the first faint lightening of the sky, and the dawn came grey and cold, shrouded in a thick mist. Perhaps the armies were doomed to another day of inaction, bound by the all-pervading mist as by a giant, paralysing hand. God alone knew what the men had suffered before they had begun their desperate march, when they had waited not knowing what that dense, opaque veil hid from them, not knowing how near death lurked unseen.

But this agony was spared the armies, for on that Sunday morning, November 8th, towards nine of the clock, a light breeze sprang up and the mist lifted. Immediately there was a stirring in the camp in the valley. A squadron of cavalry advanced and occupied a hillock at the foot of the long sweep of the White Mountain. Instantly the Bohemian cannon thundered forth a warning; but it was little more than a menace, for the shots flew harmless over the enemy. Destiny willed that Christian should make no further use of this strategic mistake of the enemy. The cavalry on the hillock could easily have been cut off from the Imperial army, their advance having been too rapid; yet Christian, though he caused his cannon to play upon the hillock, did not seize the opportunity of annihilating the squadron, and the Bavarian General Tilly was able to bring up troops to stop the gap between the advanced guard and the main army.

The Bohemians were posted in two lines reaching from

the south-west towards the wooded park of the Star Palace on the north-east. The Hungarian cavalry, that semi-barbarous troop upon which the Bohemians counted to oppose the Cossacks[1] of the Imperial forces, was placed behind the left wing beyond the range of the enemy's guns, for though the Hungarians were capable of carrying all before them in a furious charge, they were so gun-shy that it was useless to order them to stand steadfast if the enemy's cannon played on them while they waited the signal to charge. The Bohemian army was thus drawn up ready for battle.

The Bavarian corps now advanced to cross the river Scharka, over which there was but one narrow bridge. They were impeded by the deep swamps, and a certain disorder reigned. The main army under Bucquoi, as usual, hung back, and thus there was a good opportunity for the Bohemians to sweep down from their higher ground and divide the enemy's forces.

Old Anhalt and Field-Marshal Hohenlohe stood together. They both held large parchment sheets, and were deep in a discussion concerning the strategic necessity of this or that tactical movement, which they illustrated by means of the well-drawn plans on the parchments. Count Schlick and a Colonel von Stubenvoll rode up to the field-marshals.

"Sir!" cried Stubenvoll, "give me leave to charge with my cavalry! I see a sure way to victory! If we can separate the Bavarian army corps from Bucquoi's men, the day is ours!"

Anhalt hesitated. He glanced at the diagrams on the parchment.

"There is no time to be lost!" cried Schlick eagerly.

"Gentlemen, your plan is good. On, then, and cut off the enemy's advanced guard," said Duke Christian. He was doubtless an incompetent commander, but he was a brave man, and the dashing Moravian Stubenvoll's ardour appealed to him.

"Gently, gently! my lord," cried Hohenlohe. "I, too,

[1] The popular name for the Polish riders.

am Field-Marshal of this army. I, too, have a word to say! You are for ever counselling attack! Attack! attack! and abandon this commanding position! If this charge is made, our men will be cut off from us. We shall be forced to advance to their rescue, then we shall be in the valley. See, my lord! Here on paper I can show you——"

"There is no time, my lord. I pray you give me the command to charge," urged Stubenvoll anxiously.

"Be silent! You do not understand tactics," growled Hohenlohe.

"Have I permission? Duke of Anhalt! Give the word! Soon it will be too late!" cried Stubenvoll impatiently.

"In truth, it would be contrary to the teaching of Mendoza, the greatest of the Spanish military writers. No, do not charge; I cannot give the order," Anhalt answered slowly. Stubenvoll turned away.

"The day is lost," he said sadly.

The Bohemian guns thundered on harmlessly, filling the air with smoke and stench. The battle had but commenced, and it was noon.

The Imperial advanced guard stormed the hill, easily avoiding the ill-directed fire of the Bohemian cannon.

"Too fast," muttered Anhalt; "they will break into disorder when they reach the summit! Bucquoi will recall them; a good tactician will never attack under such unfavourable conditions. This is only a feint." He glanced along his own lines. A formidable foe certainly—serried rank upon serried rank of pikemen, arquebusiers, cavalry.

But the Imperialists did not fall into disarray. They reached the high ground and promptly ranged into line, while behind them two Walloon regiments advanced and formed up in good order.

Now Solms' Palatine regiment, along with Bubna's Czechish cavalry, charged. Their first onslaught was successful; the Imperial advanced guard, spent by the rapid ascent of the steep slope, fell back in some confusion,

and for an instant the Walloons also wavered. Without hesitation four German squadrons, under General Tiefenbach, rode from the valley to reinforce the leading troops. On the Bohemian side Bubna's Czechs made a second charge, which was quickly repulsed. Anhalt immediately commanded the Thurn infantry to attack. This regiment, some thirteen hundred strong, and composed of the veterans of the Bohemian forces, was regarded as the pattern for the entire army. They advanced steadily to within two hundred paces of the enemy, then, like a gust of wind rippling through a wheat-field, sudden panic ran from line to line and they halted—one man turned—another—fifteen—a hundred. Throwing away their muskets they fled wildly, knocking down the soldiers behind them. A few fired aimlessly in the air, or over their shoulders; then, caught by the contagion of fear, the whole regiment joined the stream of fugitives. The only men killed were those struck by stray bullets or trampled down by their own comrades. The enemy had remained immovable.

Seeing his most trusted warriors flying without striking a blow, Anhalt stood aghast, hardly believing the evidence of his own eyes. The whole left wing of the Bohemian army was in confusion, and the battlefield seemed peopled with a mass of frantic, struggling, flying figures. Anhalt's own regiment, six companies of cavalry, remained intact. He commanded them to charge, and they commenced their advance without hesitation; but wheeling round suddenly, they broke line, fell into disorder, and fled without attacking the enemy. Anhalt galloped after some of the deserters: "Back, you cowards!" he cried furiously. "Back! or I shoot you like the mad dogs which you are!" But the fugitives paid no heed, each man seemed only bent upon outstripping his comrades in the race from the battlefield.

Bubna's cavalry had been thrown into confusion by the flight of Thurn's infantry. Desperately the officers endeavoured to reform the broken lines, but the rearing and struggling horses were beyond their terror-stricken riders' control. A few hundred soldiers obeyed the command to

charge, but finding themselves immediately involved in the stampede of the Anhalt regiment they, too, turned and fled. In their rush they galloped into two companies of the King's Guard and a troop of Bohemian cavalry. The former were thrown into confusion and dispersed; while the latter, infected by the panic, joined the headlong race off the battlefield.

The infantry of the second line, under young Thurn, flung themselves into the mélée, but were routed with severe loss. Hohenlohe's and Kaplir's regiments were ordered to advance. During several months these troops had shown signs of insubordination, even of open mutiny. They now made a half-hearted movement forward, then, throwing their weapons in the air, they fled without firing a shot. The left wing of the Protestant army was destroyed.

The battle had lasted but one half-hour, and it seemed already lost to the Bohemians. The enemy was in full pursuit of the fugitives, and the dastards were reaping the reward of their cowardice, for the Imperialists massacred them like a herd of defenceless sheep.

Then the tide turned. Young Christian of Anhalt, who had stood waiting for the command to advance, could bear the inaction of obedience no longer, and at the head of his six hundred mounted arquebusiers he charged the pursuers impetuously. The Imperial bugles rang out, the pursuers and as many troops as could be recalled from the mélée, formed up into line and faced Christel's men, who, after their charge, had quickly returned and had also fallen into line. They opened a steady fire upon the Imperialists, volley after volley, with such good effect that the enemy retreated, leaving a ghastly row of writhing wounded and of dead men to testify to the Bohemians' prowess. A cry went up: "Victory! The Papists run!"

A detachment of Spanish Horse thundered up the hill and attacked Christel's arquebusiers, but they were repulsed, and, torrent-like, the arquebusiers burst through the wavering Spaniards and fell upon the left infantry square of the Imperial first line. It was a furious hand-

to-hand combat. The Bohemians, despite their inferior numbers, excited to dauntless valour by Christel's example, drove back the Imperial infantry, broke through their ranks, scattered them, and put them to flight. Bohemian reinforcements poured down to Christel's aid, and at this moment the Hungarians appeared on the hill's crest ready to charge. The whole Imperial division raised a cry that all was lost, and in an instant they were flying as wildly as the Bohemians had run a few minutes before.

The shouting of the Bohemian army: "Victory! Victory!" added to the terrible clamour of the battle; the squeals of the wounded horses; the thick sobs of the dying, choking out their last breath through the bloody foam at their stiffening lips; the groans of the wounded, the clash of arms, the rumble of cannon, and the cracks of the pistol shots.

Suddenly, dominating all this horror of sound, came the deafening howl of the Cossacks who swept into the mélée, trampling the wounded, spurning the dead, like a horde let loose from hell itself. The Hungarians on the hill, without waiting for the Cossacks to get up to them, turned and fled, the enemy upon their heels. The Cossacks caught up, not only the Hungarians, but also the fugitive Kaplir infantry, and mowed them down as though they had been blades of grass reaped by a scythe.

Christel gathered his troopers together and attacked again and again. Wherever the fight was thickest the Imperialists saw that slight figure on the chestnut charger, that boyish face with the radiant blue eyes which held a glint of steel despite their almost childlike candour; wherever the danger was fiercest they saw that glittering helmet with the azure ribbon which Elizabeth Stuart had given to her Ritter Christel six years since at the Heidelberg tourney. Already his left arm hung limp and useless at his side, and he guided his horse with the pressure of his knees; already his breastplate was smeared with his blood, and the blue scarf across it was stained and torn. His horse, too, was bleeding from a dozen gashes, but

Christel's voice fell sweetly on the brave beast's hearing. Tenderly, in the midst of this horror, he spoke: "Come friend, courage! On!" and the horse gave that answer which is grander than the speech of man; the answer which is an animal's devotion and obedience to him he loves.

"On! comrades! Men of Anhalt, on! For the honour of Bohemia!" Christel called, and the Imperialists around him, six men to each one of his, thundered back the war-cry of the Catholic forces: "Maria! Maria!" Mary, the blessèd Mother of God, they called; and, in truth, Christel's battle-cry was also an invocation to the saint his soul adored, for when he cried, "On! for the honour of Bohemia!" sure he meant "For the honour of Elizabeth Stuart." Perchance the Mother of God smiled down from heaven on him, knowing that a man who loves a woman thus purely, gives a perfect homage to the Queen of all womanhood.

Desperately he fought, and faithfully his men followed him. Then there came a puff of smoke close to him, and he made a despairing gesture with his dripping sword. Once more, but faintly, he cried: "On—on—for the honour—" and swayed in his saddle. An arquebusier tried to hold him up, but he sank limply backwards. With a smile, which told how his thoughts were far from that scene of carnage, his head fell back, and, his lips still whispering weakly: "For—Bohemia—and—the—Queen—" he fell to the bloodstained earth.

A flood of fresh troops—Walloons, Spaniards, Austrians, Neapolitans, Bavarians—charged impetuously, and Christel's men were trampled under. The battle was lost, as far as the left Bohemian wing and the centre were concerned. There still remained a portion of the right wing, which had only been desultorily engaged by the Bavarian division of the Imperial army. The White Mountain rose steeply on the north-west, and here the Bohemian cannon had effectually hindered the enemy's advance; but now the Bavarians, having succeeded in scaling the hill, attacked the right wing, while the

Walloons and Spaniards from the eastward threatened the left division of the Bohemian centre. Here the Bohemians faced the Imperialists coolly, and both ranks of combatants formed up in good order. The Bohemians attacked in the ancient mode of the caracole, which means that they advanced at a hand-gallop, and, riding along the enemy's foremost rank, discharged their pistols at close range. It was the usual attacking method of the warfare of a hundred years earlier, but it was useless before the weapons of the day. Many caracolers were shot down by the Imperialists' well-directed fire, a number were unhorsed and taken prisoner, while the rest galloped away in confusion.

The remaining Hungarians posted near the wall of the Star Palace, seeing the Bohemian right wing thus in disorder, left the field without striking a blow. Old Christian of Anhalt and sixteen gentlemen found themselves cut off by the stream of fugitives from the few Bohemian regiments which stood steadfast near the wall of the Star Palace Park, while the enemy drew dangerously near. Duke Christian turned his horse towards Prague.

"Gentlemen," he said brokenly, "the day is lost! Let us ride to guard the King. God in heaven! we must bid him escape before it is too late." With bowed head the aged commander rode off the battlefield.

The day was indeed lost, but there still remained a company of gallant men awaiting death in the Star Palace. Here, where but three months since Elizabeth Stuart had danced the galliard, and, where the tapestries still decked the walls beneath the delicate designs of the Renaissance frieze, five hundred gentlemen of the King's Guard under Duke William of Weimar were preparing to sell their lives dearly. King Friedrich's own banner was in their keeping, and no one should say that they had failed in their sacred trust. In the narrow space between the outer wall and the pavilion they planted the great yellow velvet standard emblazoned with that green cross which symbolised hope for the Protestant cause.

Gathering round their commander, they awaited the Imperialists' onslaught. Brave men they were, for the most part young Bohemian nobles who had made merry in the Star Palace here when Elizabeth Stuart had held her Court of laughter and gaiety, and here they were to die.

"Gentlemen of the Guard!" cried William of Weimar, "I would we had a cup of sack wherein to pledge her Majesty this day! We have no wine, so let us salute the Queen with our swords—we shall die the easier for having paid her our last homage!" With a whirr of steel the swords flashed from the scabbards.

"Gentlemen!" cried the Prince again, "the Queen!" and five hundred men stood motionless at the salute as light-hearted, as debonnair and smiling, as though they had stood before Elizabeth Stuart, queen of revelry at some gay tourney.

"To your posts!" called Duke William, and they took their appointed places around the walls. They saw how the enemy overwhelmed the few regiments beyond in the park. The stand was feeble; but who could blame a handful of troops if they quailed before the attack of ten thousand better armed adversaries? Yet until then a little flame of hope had flickered in each heart in the Star Palace.

Furiously the Neapolitans stormed the outer wall; in vain the troopers of the King's Guard behind the walls shot them down with unerring aim, for each dead man three living avengers sprang forward. They scaled the walls, the first comers to instant death; but alas! how can five hundred men resist many thousands?

"Into the palace! Save the King's standard!" roared Duke William. Frantically they rushed back with the yellow flag held high. They were in the palace—they managed to dash the heavy oaken door shut—scarce two hundred of them; the rest were dead, wounded, or shut out.

There came a lull in the deafening noise.

"Are they retreating?" queried Duke William, as he

leaned breathless against the tapestries of the centre hall. He was bleeding from brow and shoulder.

"They are moving the dead from before the door; they lie there ten deep—a pretty rampart!" some one said. It was well spoken, for now the shouts redoubled, and there came a storm of clanking blows, and with a mighty crash the door fell in.

"On to meet them! We will die like gentlemen, not like rats in a blocked water-pipe!" cried Duke William.

With a shout which re-echoed through the vaulted halls of the palace—a different music, God knows! to the galliard's lilt which had been the last sound to ring through the Star Palace—the King's Guard charged.

The Neapolitans, mad with rage at the death of their comrades, fell upon them fiercely. Man after man was cut down; the floor was slippery with blood, and both Bohemians and Neapolitans, losing their footing, fell rolling and fighting like animals in that slime of gore. A steady stream of Imperialists, Neapolitans, and Spaniards poured into the palace and finished the work of carnage.

Still the King's standard was held aloft. As one man fell, another grasped it and held it high. Of a sudden a bugle shrilled through the Star Palace, and a well-ordered troop of Bavarians shouldered their way into the hall.

"Hold! in the Emperor's name! Maximilian of Bavaria gives quarter to gallant men!"

The Neapolitans and Spaniards sullenly withdrew from the fray.

"We ask no quarter, sir!" said William of Weimar proudly.

"We are not butchers, gentlemen," returned the Bavarian captain. "You are ten wounded men against many thousands. In all honour I declare you to be my prisoners of war!"

It was useless—alas! who could fight against such odds? With a sob Duke William staggered back.

"The King's banner is captured," he said, and fell senseless at the Bavarian's feet.

Thus ended the battle of the White Mountain—a name of bitter humiliation to Bohemia. And yet, methinks, the fame of the valour of a few brave men should live for ever, shining like a star in the darkness of shame, cowardice, and defeat of that day of doom.

CHAPTER XIV

FLIGHT

KING FRIEDRICH of Bohemia sat at the State Banquet in the Hall of Homage. Through the tall diamond-paned windows the grey light of the autumn day fell dimly, but many flambeaux in the heavy silver wall-sconces flared brightly, and on the long banqueting-board a hundred candles lit the stone hall to a warm glow, and flashed on the glittering jewels, on the sheen of silks and satins of the ladies' dresses, on the rich hues of the gallants' tunics, ablaze, too, with the jewelled insignia of high orders. The yellow stone walls of the great hall, mellowed by the wise hand of time, made an harmonious background for the picture of the gaily clad throng. It was a scene of stately splendour, for Friedrich had wished to show James of England's Ambassadors that a King of Bohemia could vie in magnificence with Whitehall, nay, with the Louvre itself; and he had prayed his courtiers to don their finest doublets, and the ladies to array themselves in their richest rebatoes, fardingales, and gowns.

The King sat at the centre of the long table, her Majesty on his right, and the two English Ambassadors, one at his left and the other on her Majesty's right. Then followed in their rank the highest in the land—my Lord of Michaelowitz, my Lord Count of Thurn, the Count of Lobkowitz, and other Bohemian gentlemen; but a good number were with the army, and though laughter and music abounded, Elizabeth Stuart sighed when she missed many familiar faces. Count Schomberg was not there. He had craved her Majesty's leave to volunteer for a few months' service with the army, and she had bidden him do his will, deeming that perhaps the excitement of

camp-life might turn his thoughts from their sadness, for Schomberg had grown old, grey, and broken since Mistress Anne's death, and the years had but served to confirm his sorrow into settled melancholy. He had refused high military rank, and had taken service in one of the King's Companies.

The Queen looked down the long table. Yes, she missed Christel's boyish face; she felt a pang when she did not see old Schlick's mournful brown eyes and pointed beard à la mode du feu Roi Henri IV., and seeing Bernard Thurn was not there she grieved an instant, for he had grown to be a true friend during this last year in Bohemia. Humorously she reflected that whoever was missing from her surroundings Scultetus was never absent. She glanced at his sallow face; she had never liked the Calvinist since that day long ago when he had interrupted her moonlight reverie on the terrace at Heidelberg. Next to the preacher was seated Camerarius the secretary, a punctilious, tiresome personage whom she had vowed smelled of ink! Beside them was Doctor Jansenius, a famed scholar, who had helped to draw up the manifestoes concerning the legal and historical rights of the Bohemians to choose their King, which Friedrich had caused to be printed and distributed over Europe. Elizabeth Stuart sighed—ah! well, that form of weariness was nearly over; Friedrich was secure enough in Bohemia; and it was the opinion of the best authorities on warfare that Maximilian of Bavaria and Bucquoi would soon retreat into a winter camp without giving battle, and by the spring everything would have been quietly settled by the diplomatists.

The King rose, and all the assembly stood respectfully. "My honoured guests," he said, "I pray you drink to long life and prosperity to my revered father, King James of England!"

As he spoke a loud booming shook the windows of the Hall of Homage. Every one paused with their glasses half-way to their lips, and each gazed at his neighbour in dismay. Could it be that Prague was attacked?

"Sir Edward Conway! Sir Richard Weston!" cried Friedrich, "I drink to you, and my cannon proclaims that in honouring you I pay a regal tribute to your sovereign, my royal father, King James!" He bowed to the Ambassadors. The toast was drunk solemnly and the banquet proceeded, perhaps all the more gaily for the relief which the guests felt. That sudden roar of cannon had struck terror to their hearts, but no one owned even to themselves how fearful a thought had risen in their minds.

"Sir Richard," said the Queen, "I doubt not you feared the enemy was upon us? Fie! sir, your cheek is still white and your hand trembles."

"Nay, madame," the Ambassador answered, "I was but startled by the tintamarre. Seeing your Highness so calm and secure, who could harbour anxiety?" Elizabeth glanced at him.

"I see, sir, that you, too, are under orders to stint me of my title as Queen!" She laughed. "Well, well, it cannot be long ere all the world will own my dear lord to be a King. Yet, on my life, I am little pleased with mine old friend Sir Henry Wotton. What think you of the absurdity of addressing King Friedrich as 'my honoured Prince the crowned Elector'? Yet so are superscribed Wotton's letters out of Vienna!"

"Ah! madame, we have a hard task—love is divorced from his liege mistress, Duty, in this matter," returned Weston cautiously.

"In other words, you love us well but must obey my father?" she said lightly. "Tut, sir, old Wotton sends me graceful verses wherein he calls me Queen, and refuses me my right in letters, and, as I hear, in speech!"

"As a poet Sir Henry Wotton proclaims your Highness Queen; as a statesman—" began Weston.

"Ah! I am weary of it; quibbles and words!" she broke in quickly. "My beloved lord is King, and he has crowned me Queen, that's the fact; and calling us crowned Electors is a mockery of logic."

"Pardon us, madame, we are but poor envoys bound

to obey him who has sent us," Weston answered humbly.

They fell to talking of other matters—of Sir Francis Bacon's measures to promote the manufacture of gold and silver thread in England, which Elizabeth declared to be of profound importance to every lady who wore embroidered velvets; of the Spanish match for the Prince of Wales; how Weston had heard in Brussels, always ringing with Spanish court bruits, that the fifteen-year-old Prince Philip of Asturias would actually commence his married life with the French Princess Isabel this November; how Calderon, the writer, still languished in a Spanish dungeon; of how Louis XIII. of France and his mother, Marie de Medici, were quarreling as usual. In fact all the trivial light talk which makes life a weariness at Court.

"Surely the salutes should be over by now?" interrupted Elizabeth Stuart; "they sound distant and faint, and yet there is a constant rumbling." She listened; but the laughter and music were loud around the banquet-board, and for the moment it seemed as though the rumbling sound had ceased. The King was deep in talk with Sir Edward Conway, and he paid no heed to Elizabeth when she asked why the salutes had been so prolonged.

"Yes, I have splendid schemes for the garden here; and I have arranged for several painters to journey to Prague. I wish Rubens to paint the story of Protestantism with her Majesty and myself as the central figures," he was saying, as a man bent and whispered in his ear. "How now, sir? I cannot hear—speak out, man!" the King cried impatiently. The intruder was a captain of one of his Majesty's Companies on guard at the Hradcány Palace.

"Your Majesty," said the man in a low voice, "a peasant has just come in from the village of Oberlibotz. He says that your Majesty's horse upon the outflanks of the enemy do skirmish. There hath been the sound of continuous firing this last hour." The King paled.

"Is it more than a skirmish?" he said anxiously.

"Nay, sire, the peasant could not tell me; but he said——"

"What is amiss?" broke in Elizabeth Stuart. "Friedrich, why is your cheek so pale? Are there evil tidings?" On his arm she laid her hand, that nervous, Stuart hand, with the long, pointed, sensitive fingers that seemed so delicate that one thought they must tremble; and yet they were steady, even strong.

"What has occurred? Tell me!" she added, turning to the captain as Friedrich hesitated.

"There is a skirmishing on the White Mountain, madame," he answered, "and the cannon plays!"

"Skirmishing?" she said calmly. "Sir, you have all cried so often that the wolf is devouring the sheep, that I do not credit it. Raise the banquet, my lord; 'tis likely of no account, but you had best ride out and see. Do not tell our guests; there need be no foolish noise of dismay." The King rose.

"Gentlemen!" he called, "the feast is ended; let us proceed to the German Hall." A silence fell on the company for an instant—there was no sound of booming cannon without. The King offered his hand to her Majesty and paced down the long Hall of Homage. Once more the storm of voices of a large assembly echoed through the vaulted arches, and the musicians struck up a merry melody. The King and Queen had nearly reached the door, when a loud voice was heard without, and Duke Christian of Anhalt stood on the threshold. His grey hair was matted with sweat, his eyes were wild and bloodshot, his breastplate was tarnished, and he was bespattered from head to foot with a horrible mire red with blood.

"The day is lost, sire!" he cried hoarsely. "The enemy will be on us in an hour! Fly while there is time!" He swayed a little and leaned against the doorpost.

"Lost!—through cowardice!" he groaned, and passed a shaking hand across his brow.

"Has there been a battle, then?" asked Friedrich stupidly. Old Anhalt nodded.

"Lost!" he muttered, with his hand covering his eyes.

"Give wine to my Lord of Anhalt!" commanded Elizabeth Stuart. "He faints from weariness." No one moved. The whole company seemed stunned by this sudden disaster.

"Phyllis, pour wine into a goblet and give it to Anhalt," commanded the Queen. "These fools have parted from their senses, and that poor old man is near to swooning." My Lady Phyllis brought the wine. Elizabeth took the goblet and held it out to Duke Christian.

"Drink, my friend. You shall tell us your sorry history when you are refreshed." The old man drank a few drops gulpingly.

"Madame," he said, and two great tears rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks, "alas! that I have failed you! Fly, for the dear God's sake!"

Now a wild horror seized the company, and a babel of voices arose. "The enemy!—the Cossacks!—they will put us to death!—they will massacre us!—where is our army?—Destroyed!—Alas! fly, fly—the Cossacks!"

Desperately men ran hither and thither, some to the windows, peering anxiously through the diamond panes as though they expected to see the dreaded Cossacks riding up to the Palace, some to fetch their pistols lying on the table of the smaller hall. The women, weeping, clung to each other. Only Elizabeth Stuart and her Englishwomen remained calm; Amalia Solms was yattering with terror.

"Madame, let us hide in the cellars! The Cossacks will ravage us," she wailed. The Queen turned on her furiously.

"Recall your senses! Are you a serving-wench? Must you yowl like a cur? God! I thought you'd good blood in your veins!" she cried. "Come, let us go and collect what clothes we need. If we have to fly we must have other raiment than a satin skirt and an embroidered fardingale!"

"You always insult me, madame," began the Solms, drying her eyes and drawing herself up.

"Praise be to insult if it makes you behave like a lady of quality!" said Elizabeth Stuart bluntly. She led the

way through the long corridors to her own apartments Here the quiet was like balm after the uproar in the Hall of Homage. Elizabeth Stuart gave her orders as if she were preparing for a day's hunting.

"Give me the green velvet riding-gown; yes, the warmer one. Now my plain hat with the diamond buckle; nay, not one with a feather. Phyllis, help the Lady of Solms to gather my jewels together. Alison, go bid the nursewoman prepare Rupert for a journey to a neighbouring castle. Do not tell her ought, save that the King wishes us to leave the Hradcány, or she will lose her wits with fear. There, give me Jacky's coat—poor one!" she said, catching the little monkey up, "I will never fail you." Her calmness gave confidence to her ladies, and they did her bidding promptly.

A hurried knock came on the door and a page ran in.

"Madame, the King has ordered the carosses immediately," he began, but paused in surprise as a man pushed past him roughly. It was Master Scultetus.

"The King has ridden out to the Strahow Gate!" he cried. "He bids your Majesty fly to the Old City at once. The coaches will be in the courtyard; I will take charge of you, will escort you to the other side of the river. Your Majesty must not wait for the King's return."

"Until his Majesty is with me, I shall not leave the palace," the Queen answered haughtily.

"It is the King's command," began the Calvinist.

"When the King is not here, I command, sir," she returned, and flung back her head with her accustomed proud gesture.

The noise of running and a confused murmur of voices fell on their hearing, and a crowd of waiting-women rushed into the Queen's apartments.

"Save us—you brought us here, the Cossacks are upon the town!" they sobbed; they were the German tiring-women and underlings who had accompanied her Majesty from Heidelberg.

"We have seen the Cossacks running through the

streets! Save us! You brought us to Prague!" they moaned.

"You have seen the Cossacks?" queried her Majesty. Even her cheek blanched at this, for all knew the horrors wrought by the Polish soldiery.

"Madame, fly ere it is too late," urged Scultetus.

"I have told you, sir, that I await the King," she said proudly; "or news of him," she added a little tremulously. Now the whole palace echoed with cries and sobs; men and women rushed through the corridors crying the word "Cossacks!" Everywhere was panic, confusion, and useless haste. Elizabeth Stuart felt how alone she was among this distracted crowd. Alas! why had she given Schomberg permission to leave her? He had always stood between her and the difficulties of a great household.

"At least await the King in the courtyard porch," urged Scultetus. "The coaches are there, and, when his Majesty returns, you can ride away immediately."

Elizabeth Stuart looked round her room. She had spent many a happy hour here during her year in Bohemia. Should she ever again see this room with the gilded mirrors, the large, tapestry-hung bed where Rupert had been born, the splendid Renaissance mouldings on wall and ceiling? Yet, after all, if she left Prague for ever it could be but to return to Heidelberg.

"Madame! madame, I pray you hasten!" Scultetus' harsh voice broke in on her pondering.

"There is enough haste in the world already," she answered, but, clasping her monkey in her arms, she passed out into the corridor. Here the waiting-women were huddled together, weeping and wailing.

"Save us!" they cried when they saw the Queen.

"Come, then, and if I am saved you will be rescued too," she said kindly. Together they took their way through the maze of corridors to the porch of the second courtyard.

It was an unwonted group, like to some fantastic finale to a comic mask—the Queen and her ladies

in riding-gowns, the serving-maids, tiring-women, her Majesty's laundresses, the German scullery-wenches,—velvets and jewels beside homespun cloth, coarse aprons, and linen caps. Master Scultetus, sombre and unsightly in his long black gown and skull-cap, was there; and one or two courtiers richly attired as they had left the State banquet, a few young pages in velvet tunics, lackeys in full gala livery, and cooks in white overalls. The courtyard was full of coaches: here was a baggage-waggon which sumptermen were piling up with furniture, bed-hangings, and linen; there was a cart which Master Camerarius and his clerks were filling with State documents.

For some time these proceedings continued undisturbed, and a measure of calm returned to the waiting crowd. One or two women hurried away to fetch their cloaks, lackeys ran to bring some of her Majesty's coffers which a few tiring-women, taking courage now, remembered to pack. The Queen sat on the guards' bench with her monkey clasped in her arms, while beside her the nurse-woman swayed, hushing the baby Prince to sleep. With trembling lips the woman hummed a lullaby, prompted by that magnificent instinct which teaches women to know how battle, murder, and grim death may riot near, but that the babies must sleep whate'er befalls.

There came the clatter of horses' hoofs, and a dozen riders dashed into the courtyard.

The Queen advanced to the porch. "Friedrich!" she said, and the word thrilled from her lips like a cry of joy; for despite courage, pride, and calmness she had agonised while the King was away. Her fancy had painted half-a-hundred pictures wherein he, whom she loved more with the sheltering tenderness of a mother than with the love of a woman, lay bleeding, suffering, slain perchance. Now one glance at his face was sufficient to tell her that disaster had come to them, and immediately her courage rose ready to meet whatever fate held in store. The King dismounted and hurried to her.

"All is lost," he said dully; "the whole army is in flight. I found a rabble of our men battering at the Strahow Gate, praying for admittance. Schlick was there, and Hohenlohe. I ordered the gates to be opened, and they were borne in among an ugly rush of fugitives. They say that a number of Hungarians have entered through some breach in the walls; many have tried to ford the river beyond the ramparts; hundreds are drowned!" He bowed his head, and stood bent and broken as an old man.

"Will you not defend the town?" she cried.

"Useless, useless," he muttered; "there is treachery! The enemy is upon us—we must fly!" Those nearest the King among the listening crowd heard him say the words, "The enemy is upon us," and instantly a shriek of terror and a wild tumult arose. "Fly! fly! the Cossacks!" Men and women rushed helter-skelter across the court-yard. Scultetus' harsh voice was heard even above the din:

"The coaches! To the coaches! Hasten!" The Queen was almost pushed into the first coach, her ladies after her.

"Put the nurse-woman here beside me! Give Rupert to me!" she cried.

"No time, they can follow in the second coach!" called Friedrich. "Drive on! Hasten! To the Old Town, across the Karl's Bridge." He mounted his horse, ranged up beside her Majesty's coach, and the cavalcade started at a hand-gallop. A frenzy seized those left in the court-yard, and the coaches were besieged by crowds of sobbing, clamouring women.

In the porch a courtier, who had kept a remnant of self-control, heard a wailing cry at his feet, and saw a bundle of fine linen and flimsy laces lying beneath the guards' bench.

"God in heaven! The little Prince!" the courtier cried, and, seizing the bundle, he shouldered roughly through the crowd to the nearest coach.

"Give way!" he thundered. "Here is a more precious

burden than such as you!" He struck out fiercely, even drew his sword. "Here! you woman, whoever you may be, take the child to the Old Town!" he cried, and flung the infant into the arms of a kitchen-wench who was seated in a gilded carosse where the highest in the land were wont to ride. Before the driver could whip up the rearing, frightened horses a woman flung herself on to the coach-step.

"Give me my baby!" she yelled, and, clambering into the coach, snatched Prince Rupert from the astonished kitchen-wench. Once more the instinct of the nurse had conquered terror, and the babe was safe in the arms of the craven who, in her panic, would have left him to be trampled to death.

Swaying and jolting, coach after coach drove away from the Hradcány Palace. Soldiers of the King's Company galloped through the cobble-stoned yard; sumptermen and pack-horses and baggage-waggons; serving-maids and henchmen, bakers, embroiderers, shoemakers, furriers—a motley crowd—joined in the hurrying stream which poured in mad confusion down the hill towards the Old Town.

In that surging crowd it was no easy matter to drive quickly. The whole of Prague was gathered on the Queen's route; shouts and cries filled the air. Here was a bearded soldier telling his own version of the battle to a group of eager burghers; here a peasant from one of the villages near the White Mountain was being questioned by a throng of half inquisitive, half terror-stricken citizens; Jews, artisans, workmen, soldiers, market-women. It was a dense mob, and though now and then a man would doff his cap as the Queen passed, there was not wanting in hostile cries, and even once or twice a stone thudded against the leather curtain of her Majesty's travelling coach.

At length the Karls Bridge was reached. Here the crowd was even more closely packed, and the King and his few courtiers reined in their horses, leaving the coach to lead the way. Towards the centre of the bridge the

rabble was so thick that the coach perforce halted before the stone crucifix. Here stood a thin-faced man in a black cassock. He had climbed on to the stone balustrade, and, steadying himself by holding the base of the cross with one hand, he stood with outstretched arm pointing at her Majesty. A lull fell, all around desired to hear what this man would say.

"Thou, who hast insulted the Christ, see now how swift is God's vengeance!" he cried loudly. "Thou, who didst swear never to pass this bridge till this emblem of our Faith was destroyed, see now, how thou art forced to fly into exile! The Christ is avenged!" Furiously the King drew his sword, and essayed to press his way through the mob; but rude hands were laid on his bridle, and his horse was forced back on its haunches. By the time the King had succeeded in calming the terrified animal the speaker had disappeared, swallowed up by the surging crowd. Once during this harangue the Queen had made a movement as though she would rise and deny this accusation, but, though she had opened her lips to speak, she had said no word. Denial was useless. Perhaps she felt she had too true a story to tell; none would believe her! An ominous, hostile roar went up, then came a momentary lull, and some one shouted a Czechish sentence which was greeted by a yell of coarse laughter.

With flushed cheeks, eyes ablaze with anger, and head proudly erect, the Queen sat silent as her coach passed over the Karls Bridge and into the narrow streets of the Old Town of Prague.

. . . . . .

In a citizen's house on the right bank of the Moldau there was a company assembled. In a low ceilinged chamber hung with ancient tapestries, and furnished with heavy chairs, a massy centre table, and ancient carven sideboards decked with silver cups and elaborately emblazoned glasses, a fire burned brightly on the wide hearth. On the table and the sideboards, waxen candles, in heavy silver candlesticks, shed a soft light on the anxious faces

of the company. Outside, a rising gale moaned fitfully, and the spasmodic gusts drove the raindrops sharply against the panes of the small lattice windows.

King Friedrich was seated at the centre table before a slender glass wherefrom arose the perfume of mulled wine, but the King was not tempted by its fragrancy; he pushed away the glass, and, leaning his head upon his hand, he stared moodily at the leaping flames on the hearth. Elizabeth Stuart sat in a high-backed chair; ever and anon her strong white fingers drummed impatiently on the wooden chair-arms. My Lady of Solms, my Lady Phyllis Devereux, Mistress Alison Hay, Mistress Clovelly and Mistress Stanley were grouped together near the window. Master Scultetus, Duke Christian of Anhalt, my Lords of Thurn, Hohenlohe, and Schlick, young Bernard Thurn and several Czechish gentlemen sat round the table; while before the hearth the English ambassadors, Sir Richard Weston and Sir Edward Conway, conversed in low tones with Sir Francis Nethersole, the British agent to the Protestant Union.

"My lord, I pray you not to counsel the King to tarry in Prague," said Hohenlohe after a long pause. "The day is lost; the army is destroyed; what will avail if the King is taken prisoner?"

"Perchance you are right," said Thurn musingly; "yet, if the Duke of Bavaria answers that he grants eight days' armistice, could we not rally enough troops to defend the city? We could hold out for a few weeks' siege. Sir Edward Conway, how long would you need to ride to England, and return with enough English gold to buy off Maximilian, or at least Messieurs de Tilly and Bucquoi?" Conway shook his head.

"Alas! sir, I could but promise to return in twenty-five days, although I would spare no effort; yet I must have a few days in England to arrange the collection of so large a sum, and the King, my master, will require a day or more to consider if he can vouch for this outlay," he said doubtfully.

"Surely, no one can hesitate before emergency!" cried

Anhalt. "Even King James—" he paused and glanced at the Queen.

"My lords," she said, "this is no time for negotiations; we must stand or fall by our own endeavour—battle alone against our foes or fly before them. My father will not help; later, perchance, he will send troops to sweep Spinola from the Palatinate, but for Bohemia he will do nothing. Am I right, gentlemen?" she added to the Englishmen.

"I fear your Maj—your Highness is but too true a prophet," returned Conway.

"Fly now—at once, sire!" Thurn exclaimed. "We risk our heads by staying here! Death and dishonour only await us, and your Majesty's liberty is at stake."

"Monsieur mon père! death may be in store, but can dishonour approach those who die for Bohemia?" cried Bernard Thurn hotly. "I pray you let me escort her Majesty to Karlstein. I will guard her there—for a year if there is need, and, when we have re-won Bohemia, she will return to her town of Prague."

"You speak a vain thing, my young sir!" growled Hohenlohe. "As a tactician I know how useless it is to rally a disheartened army in the face of an overwhelming organised force! Flight is the only reasonable course. Who gave you leave to meddle in the council of grown men?" he added, turning upon Bernard Thurn in that access of fury which is bred by fear.

"We dally with words, my lord," answered the young man boldly; "the night has fallen and we have done nought! My commanders! Give me leave to ride with a flag of truce to Duke Maximilian and crave an eight days' armistice! At least that will give time for your deliberations," he added with a hint of scorn in his voice.

"According to Mendoza's rule a flag of truce from a vanquished foe can only mean surrender," said Anhalt slowly.

"And yet again, by the writings of the Dutch School a parley may take place at any time without binding either parties to any course of action," replied Hohenlohe.

"Ah! sirs! surely this is no time for written rules!"

cried Elizabeth Stuart impatiently. "Let Bernard Thurn go demand the truce, and then we shall know how long we have to decide our plan of action."

"Sire, have I leave to ride to the enemy's camp?" said Bernard Thurn. The King nodded, and, turning to Camerarius, he said:

"You had best write praying for an eight days' truce." The secretary drew out of his pocket a scroll of parchment and an inkhorn. Deftly he sharpened a quill, and, leaning low over the table, began to write. Silence fell on the company, broken only by the crackling of the fire, the hurrying scud of the rain against the windows, the moaning of the wind-gusts, and the scratch of the quill as Camerarius embellished this missive of haste and supplication with flourishes and initial letters.

When the document was finished, the King affixed to it that "Fredericus Rex" which he had ne'er thought to sign beneath so sorry a page of history.

"Take this missive to my cousin of Bavaria, Count Bernard Thurn. Tell him I crave his kindness by reason of our kinship," he said, with a touch of his usual grandiloquent pomposity.

"Tell him no such thing, my lord!" broke in the Queen impulsively; "say, rather, that we but crave his chivalrous courtesy that we may fight him the better! We ask no kindness from our foes; the King did not express himself clearly!" Bernard Thurn bent the knee before her.

"I would serve a man of such spirit to the death, madame," he said huskily, and went.

"Blessed undaunted lady!" murmured Sir Edward Conway.

. . . . . .

Hour after hour dragged its leaden-footed way through the night. The Queen's ladies had gone to rest; the gentlemen's heads sank forward in drowsy weariness. Often the citizen, who owned the house, came in and threw fresh logs upon the glowing embers on the hearth, snuffed a candle, brought new flagons of wine or more meat and bread.

The Queen still sat in the high-backed chair, though sometimes she rose stiffly and, going to the window, stared out into the darkness. Once as she passed near the King she touched him gently on the shoulder. He started, and, catching her hand in both of his, gazed up at her piteously. She glanced at the gentlemen; some were dozing uneasily, and those who were awake had averted their eyes from this commune of stricken souls. Gently she drew his head against her breast, and her hand wandered over his hot brow.

"Darkness and sunshine take their turns on earth, dear heart," she whispered; "yet doth love remain unchanged whate'er befalls."

"I have failed," he muttered brokenly; "men will mock me——"

"Courage! How often has failure been the prologue to triumph! We cannot be brought under fortune save by owning misfortune. Oh! dear heart, you are so strong, and I am very weak; help me now." It was the old splendid falsehood whereby the strong woman seeks to inspire strength in the weak man—the grand untruth to which only the strong dare stoop. The King sprang up impetuously. "The Queen is very weary, my lords," he cried; "let us decide that, come what may, we stay in Prague and fight to the last! And now to sleep! Let me be summoned when my young Lord Thurn returns. I give you tryst at sunrise, when we will take the proper measures for our army." His burst of energy seemed to recall the courage of those weary watchers, and from despair they awoke to effort.

"We will stay and work out plans of defence!" said the elder Thurn. "We will have a good—" The Queen interrupted him.

"Think you that kings sleep while there is a battle to be planned? Nay, my lord! Friedrich of Bohemia works with you, and I, who am no skilled tactician, will at least stay by to cheer you—if I can." She resumed her seat in the high-backed chair and silently watched how Anhalt, Thurn, Hohenlohe, and the rest wrote com-

mands, drew up manifestoes, manœuvred—on paper—with an army which lay slaughtered not two miles away, or with disbanded troops of mutineers and deserters. She knew full well that all this was futile, but she felt that to the last it behoved the King to strive; that his only dignity lay in a semblance of courageous hope now that all was lost. Yet it was not her way to underrate the gravity of their plight. It was easy enough for Thurn to bid them fly, but whither could they turn their steps? The Palatinate being entirely overrun by Spinola's troops, the threatened city of Heidelberg would be no safer a refuge than Prague. In any case it would be impossible to win through the lines of the Imperial army which blocked the road to the Palatinate. Their only course was to pass through Silesia, and throw themselves on the hospitality of George William of Brandenburg.

. . . . . .

The gray dawn had long come, and still there was no answer from Maximilian of Bavaria, but the occupation had banished despair from the watchers' hearts.

Hurried steps came on the stairs, the door was flung open, and Bernard Thurn stood on the threshold.

"Maximilian of Bavaria grants eight hours' armistice. He bade me tell your Majesty that he is answerable to the Emperor for the taking of the rebellious city of Prague," he said hoarsely. "I have ridden as hard as I could, but I was constantly held up by sentries or marauders; it is nigh upon five hours since the truce was granted! Duke Maximilian counted it from last midnight. It is long past dawn now. I, too, pray your Majesties to fly! There is not a single regiment of your army ready to take the field. We have four hundred men of the Guard who were at the Hradcány, but that is all Bohemia's army." The generals stared at one another in consternation. Elizabeth Stuart rose.

"Are there tidings of Christian of Anhalt and of Count Schomberg?" she asked.

"Madame, the death of heroes calls for no sorrow," the young man answered solemnly. She bowed her head

in silence for an instant, then in a low voice she said:

"I would know where and how they died?"

"Christel fell in the mélée at the head of his men, and Schomberg was cut down while he defended the King's standard at the Star Palace," Bernard Thurn said. With outstretched hands the Queen went to old Anhalt.

"God comfort you," she whispered. The old man bowed over her hand.

"Madame," he made answer, "he was the light of mine eyes, but the day is lost and I have no time for grieving now. There are enough years wherein to mourn him." He turned away, and the Queen left him, knowing that silence was the only tribute she could pay to his pain.

"Order the coaches, Count Thurn," she said calmly. "Whenever they are ready we will start for Silesia. All the coaches, sir," she added. "I will not leave one terror-stricken serving-wench to rue the day when she followed Elizabeth Stuart to Bohemia."

. . . . . .

The rain fell in torrents over Prague, and, despite curiosity and anxiety, the streets were empty as the King's cortège drove away. Through the slit in the leather curtain of her carosse the Queen peered at those gloomy, narrow streets. How different was this exit from Prague to her sunlit entry but a short year since!

When the cavalcade reached a wood beyond the city where she had sometimes hunted, she bid her driver pause, and leaning out of her carosse she gazed over the town. She could see the turrets and cupolas, the spires and towers of the Hradcány Palace; but the mist fell like a shroud over the White Mountain, where the pride of Bohemia lay shattered for ever.

CHAPTER XV

HOLLAND

"Fille et femme de roy, sans biens et sans couronne,
Je suis de mon époux le sort trop inhumain.
Sans en être attendri mon Père m'abandonne,
Mais la Hollande m' ouvre et sa bourse et son sein."

IT was spring, and over Holland the clear skies smiled; the fields were radiant in their young green, and the windmills turned lazily beneath the kiss of the soft breeze. Quaintly the masts of ships and boat-sails rose, seeming to glide through the fields themselves, for the canals were hidden from view, deep enshrined between their trim banks.

It seemed to Elizabeth Stuart that there was a likeness to England in this peaceful Dutch land, something of the same suavity in the air, something English in the brilliancy of the green of grass and hedge, and in the neatness of the village streets with the homely, square brick houses and their shining, brass door-knockers. She thought they resembled those villages near Combe, which she had so often seen as a little maiden. After the o'er-darkened days since her flight from Prague the Queen was very ready to respond to the happy mood of the spring days, for despite her undaunted cheerfulness she had fought a desperate fight with sorrow and despair. The journey to Breslau had been a grim trial, and she shuddered when she remembered the gloom, the pouring rain, the deep mud of the rutted roads—then the chill of the reception by the citizens of Breslau. Who wanted to honour a fugitive King and Queen? There was danger in harbouring a Prince over whom the ban of the Empire hovered; the victorious Emperor's wrath would be meted out to those who gave succour to his fallen foe. The Breslauers had taught Elizabeth Stuart the first line in that lesson of humiliation which it was ordained she should learn to

the last letter. They had given the fugitives shelter—had even raised a large sum of money for them; but they had showed plainly that they would be rid of their unfortunate royal guests. Then George William of Brandenburg, Friedrich's sister's spouse, had hung back in offering hospitality; he whom, in the happy days at Heidelberg, she had judged so shrewdly, saying: "Our fond brother sits eternally on a stile between two fields; he could ne'er be a foe save through fear for his own skin, but God grant I may never need to depend on his friendship." He had proved her bitterly right, for he had professed a dozen reasons for refusing her shelter in Berlin; had proffered the gaunt, uninhabited Castle of Cüstrin, but at the same time had advised her to refuse his generous offer, for Cüstrin was unfurnished, unheated, unvictualled—indeed he had retracted his offer of Cüstrin. Then, when she had set out from Breslau, deeming that when she arrived in Berlin, out of common charity he could not refuse shelter to a woman so near the agony of motherhood, she had been stopped by his messengers, who avowed their master's reluctance to receive her—nay, forbade her to journey farther to Berlin or to Cüstrin.

Thus, on a bitter cold December night she had found herself stranded on the country roads with no prospect of finding refuge—she, Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, Electress Palatine, she, who bore a child beneath her heart! Like an outcast beggar-woman she had seen the lights gleaming in a castle window, and, poor suppliant, she had stood before the door of the Castle of Carolath and prayed for shelter for one night. In this hour of her bitter need she had found a friend—Herr von Schönaich, Lord of Carolath, had bidden her welcome, had bent the knee before her, and prayed her honour his poor house. Many days she had tarried in this honourable gentleman's castle; Schönaich was proud to brave the Emperor's wrath, proud to offer loyal homage to the fallen sovereigns. God knows, it was to cost him dear. At last George William of Brandenburg had relented, and had opened the doors—of Cüstrin. Here, in gaunt rooms, where rats ran along the broken wainscoting, she had camped, making what

she could of comfort with her own tapestries and bed-hangings, and buying scant victuals from the ill-stored market of the small town. Her ladies had tended her and answered her brave spirit by loyal cheerfulness. And here but a few days after her arrival she had given birth to a "large and goodly" son, whom she had caused to be christened Maurice after the Prince of Orange.

"A soldier's name for my little one, I pray you," she had cried from her tapestry-hung bed in that bare unlovely room. "He will have to seek his fortune by the sword. Alack! all I can give him is a soldier's name."

The gloom of Cüstrin had been lightened for Elizabeth by the tidings that Christel of Anhalt, though sore wounded and a prisoner in Vienna, was alive. He had been found among a heap of dead on the battlefield of the White Mountain, and had been dragged before Bucquoi, who, most chivalrous of foes, had caused him to be well tended and had entertained him honourably. When she had heard this news it had been to Elizabeth Stuart as if a stone were lifted from her heart, for not only had she grieved for Christel, but it had seemed to her that Destiny, striking thus near to her, was a sure omen of impending doom for her and those she loved. Thus, despite the dreariness of Cüstrin and the darkness of the political horizon, her buoyant spirit had risen and she had faced life once more, not alone with her accustomed brave cheerfulness, but with a degree of real confidence and gaiety.

George William's charity had been as short-lived as it had been grudgingly given, and he had soon required his guests to seek other hospitality. The infant Maurice could be housed in Berlin if need be, he had generously offered, but the mother and father—this vagrant couple—must move on.

Wolfenbüttel had been the next stage, and here her Majesty's aunt Elizabeth of Denmark, Duchess of Brunswick, had given Elizabeth Stuart friendly welcome. At first the Queen had declared she would not sojourn at Wolfenbüttel; she did not choose to associate with Christian of Brunswick, the mad Halberstädter! She had vowed

he was no fitting company for an honest woman, be she Queen or maid. It was a whimsey of her Majesty's, but she had long been full of scorn and anger against this reprobate kinsman of hers. Even the King had laughed at her for this.

"Dear heart, the Halberstädter is no worse than many another gallant!" he had said.

"I say he is, and I will not see him. That is enough!" she had answered; and when Elizabeth Stuart spoke thus vehemently it was best to acquiesce. But the pother had been soon cleared up: Christian of Brunswick was not at Wolfenbüttel, not even at Halberstadt; he was somewhere in the Netherlands commanding a troop of Maurice of Orange's cavalry. So the days had passed peacefully enough at Wolfenbüttel.

And now the King and Queen journeyed to the Hague at the invitation of the States General and of the Stadthouder Maurice of Orange. They were greeted by the Dutch as though they had been victors on a triumphal progress. Everywhere great crowds applauded the Protestant champions; cannon thundered salutes to the fallen monarch; the estates voted goodly sums for his maintenance; a fine house in the Hague was to be placed at his disposal; and their entry to the Hague was, if anything, more sumptuous than the entry thither on the bridal journey eight years ago. A respectful, orderly crowd lined the roads for miles, and the broad walk of the Vijverberg was so packed with citizens that many were pushed into the shallow square sheet of water and got a ducking as the reward of their enthusiasm.

As the Queen's carosse moved through the crowd she was hugely diverted at the aspect of this assembly of substantial burghers, for their sober-coloured tunics merged into a blurred mass, and their heads, set between exactly similar wheel-like ruffs and high-crowned black hats, made them appear, as she whispered to my Lady Phyllis, "like a multitude of turnips with hats set upon round white plates."

The Queen of Bohemia's house faced the Lange Voorhout, standing a little back from the broad street, in a

garden with high clipped, hornbeam hedges, and a centre fountain bordered by formal flower-beds, where red and yellow tulips stood in prim, decorous rows. It was an unpretentious red-brick house, with white stone copings framing the large, square windows; not a palace truly, but then her Majesty would only sojourn at the Hague until the evil times were past and she could return either to Prague or to Heidelberg; or, if this did not come to pass in a few months, she would presumably repair to her father at Whitehall.

Meanwhile her Court at the Hague immediately became the hub of Holland's fashion. Her house could boast of no marbled halls as at Heidelberg, of no gilded splendour as at the Hradcány, yet the lofty, panelled chambers were homely and comfortable, with their deep fireplaces gaily adorned by the coloured Dutch tiles, and the polished oaken wall-cupboards, through whose glass doors were seen the blue and white jars, vases, plates, and cups of that new pottery ware of Delft, which was already so much the mode in Holland. These rooms saw brilliant gatherings of ladies and gallants, who vowed that though Elizabeth Stuart had temporarily renounced the splendour of a Court, still she was always a queen regnant over a kingdom of hearts and an empire of manifold gaiety. Perhaps in her relief at the ending of those dark days before her flight from Prague, of those dreary months of sorrow and humiliation in Silesia and Prussia, the Queen was a trifle over-merry for one who was the cause of the horror of war having been let loose over Bohemia and the Palatinate. At least, so said those who had not been brought within the magic of her potent charm. In Holland all hailed her advent with enthusiasm —the more so because in latter years there had been no Court at the Hague; for Maurice of Orange and his half-brother, Frederik Hendrik, were unmarried, and thus the Stadthouder's Castle, the Binnenhof, had become a trysting-place of soldiers, a college of tacticians, more than a courtly palace.

Holland, always famed as the home of culture and refinement, had risen to a high degree of prosperity during

the twelve years' truce with her traditional foe, Spain; and though the expiration of this armistice chanced to coincide with the dethroned Bohemian Majesties' arrival, and the Dutch were busy with preparations for the resumption of active warfare, yet there was a sense of peaceful security at the Hague.

The spring days passed merrily enough for Elizabeth Stuart, and she followed the falcon in the forests near the Hague, danced at the Binnenhof, made gay excursions to Amsterdam, where she held a Court and graciously received many Englishwomen of fashion, who hurried over to Holland to offer their respectful homage to her Majesty,

What mattered it that Ferdinand had hurled the ban of the empire upon King Friedrich? It was illegal thus to pronounce the dread sentence which made a prince an outlaw, and those who befriended him or his, guilty of high treason to the empire, for the ban had been spoken without a fair and open trial, and this was contrary to the letter of the law, which bound the Emperor to afford the accused trial by his peers.

Mansfeld, probably not having received for his treachery as large a price as he had expected from the Emperor, was in arms again in Friedrich's name on the frontier of the Palatinate and Bohemia. So far things were not entirely hopeless for King Friedrich, for King James still professed his intention of sending troops to save the Palatinate, though, as usual, he procrastinated, alleging his exchequer to be empty. Friedrich implored him to provide, nay, to lend funds for maintaining Mansfeld and raising an English army to reinforce him; but the money was refused, and only a small force of two thousand men, under Sir Horace Vere, was despatched to the Palatinate with instructions to garrison Heidelberg, Mannheim, and Frankenthal, which Spinola had not yet seized. Alas! the English troops in Bohemia had played a sorry part, for the garrison of six hundred Englishmen which had held the impregnable Karlstein, hearing of the defeat at the White Mountain, had surrendered without striking a

blow. Truly, as Elizabeth Stuart said bitterly, Bernard Thurn had been right when he had so proudly declared that the Englishmen's gallantry would match the Bohemians' valour and loyalty! Yet she must now e'en place her trust in another body of English volunteers and in the treacherous Mansfeld. The Princes of the Protestant Union, too, had now openly abandoned King Friedrich and had concluded a treaty of peace with Ferdinand, wherein the Bohemian King and his Palatinate were not even mentioned.

The prospect was black enough, and yet, with King James's Ambassadors negotiating in Vienna for a peaceful arrangement, with Maurice of Orange and his army ready to take the field, with the King of Denmark professing his ardour to assist, with a veritable host of young nobles pouring into the Hague—Bohemians, Germans, Englishmen, Scotchmen, French Huguenots—all eager to take arms in the cause of romantic misfortune, who could blame King Friedrich and Elizabeth Stuart if they deemed the gloom which hung over them to be but a passing thundercloud?

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life," her Majesty quoted when Friedrich grew faint-hearted. "An we are faithful to our cause, God will remember us when the time of our trial is over. Courage and a bright face, dear my lord! We have but to wait a few years, and then hey for home at Heidelberg, if not to Prague again!" Thus she set herself to wait bravely, and with her usual undaunted spirit she threw herself into whatever the Hague offered of gaiety. Friedrich, on the other hand, with that obstinate German dislike of the Dutch, was but ill at ease in Holland. He hated the Dutchman's homely, friendly ways; they seemed to him too informal, and lacking in respect to a German prince. In the Hague, as in almost every European town, there were distributed dozens of caricatures, of rudely printed pamphlets and ribald verses, wherein the "Winter King" and the "Winter Queen" were held up to ridicule. Nowadays Friedrich

was universally known by this sobriquet, which was taken from the Pope's saying that "he was only a King of Snows whose realm would soon melt." Friedrich raged at the derisive appellation, and his anger knew no bounds when he saw her Majesty dubbed "Winter Queen" in the pasquinades. He resented these lampoons bitterly; but Elizabeth laughed, and even caused them to be bought for her from the pedlars who hawked them through the streets.

One day she sat in her wainscoted parlour with a heap of these "Spottblätter" on the table beside her.

"See, my lord!" she cried, taking one from the pile. "Here am I dressed as a beggar-woman, with a baby strapped to my shoulder; and here are you pushing a hand-barrow full of crowns, and underneath is written: 'A Winter King seeks Summer employment!'" She laughed, and handed him the freshly printed sheet!

"What insolence!" he muttered angrily. "God give me power to punish these loons some day!"

"Why not laugh instead of raging? Laughter routs brutal mockery so much better than weak anger. See, here are other pasquinades. Oh! dear my lord, never look so gloomy; they are really droll enough." She read out the absurd lampoon purporting to be a Prague town-crier's proclamation of how a sallow-faced youth, afflicted with a squint, had gone amissing. "This fellow answers to the name of Friedrich, King of Bohemia, and has just played a part in a well-known, but badly acted comedy. A reward offered for keeping him out of sight," the legend ended. There was a grotesque drawing illustrating the popular rhyme which was sung in the alleys of the Hague just then, a foolish song enough, telling how Denmark, Holland, and England had promised Friedrich a hundred thousand soldiers, but that as men were scarce, they had sent: Holland, a hundred thousand cheeses; Denmark, a hundred thousand red-herrings; and England, a hundred thousand—ambassadors. Elizabeth Stuart laughed; on the face of it there was a certain truth in the ditty, and she could not resist the humour of the verse concerning

her father's hundred thousand ambassadors, when she recalled the many useless solemn embassies which King James always delighted to despatch.

With sombre brow and dejected attitude the King stood before the window, gazing dully out into the garden, while the Queen looked through the pamphlets. Suddenly he turned on her almost roughly.

"I marvel, madame, that you find pleasure in such insolent trash," he said.

"Pleasure! dear heart?" she answered quietly. "Nay, but I find these verses droll, and I will not honour them with anger; they are not worth it."

"At least do not let your children see them," he said.

"My children! Yours, too, methinks!" she said, laughing. "Hal could not understand them, though, as you say, perchance I had best hide them from Maurice, for as he is but six months old, he might be deeply wounded. Oh! dear my heart; if you would take the smaller things of life less gravely! You and Amalia Solms half kill me with your portentous gravity over small matters!"

"'Tis the German way to treat life seriously—" he began.

"'Tis the English way to crush disagreeable trifles by ignoring them," she said, and a note of weariness underlay her bantering tone. "Nay, do not let us wrangle," she added; "tell me whom you have seen on the Vijverberg this day."

He told her how he had conversed with Sir Dudley Carlton, the English envoy to their High Mightinesses the States-General; how Mijnheer Jacob Cats, the proverb lover, had paced beside him for a half-hour's talk; how the Stadthouder's brother, Frederik Hendrik of Orange, had greeted him and spoken long of the beauty of Amalia Solms; how the young painter Mierevelt had been there.

"And, sweeting, I have some tidings which your fool pamphlets put from my memory," he said. "Master Scultetus writes that he durst not stay in Heidelberg for fear of Spinola's troops, and thus he has returned to

Silesia, where he prays us to obtain for him a cure of souls."

"He is not returning to us?" she cried. "Friedrich! I could sing aloud with joy! That sour-visaged man hath brought us enough ill luck all these years, and I am too happy that he abandons us when we are in misfortune. But, mark you, I think it ugly of him," she added.

"Woman's logic!" the King said angrily, though a flush of embarrassment rose to his cheek. "You accuse a wise man, and a devoted servant, of bringing us misfortune; you are glad to be rid of him, yet you censure him for not wishing to be a burden on us in our poverty."

"Oh! our poverty!" she mocked.

"Yes, ma mie," he said sadly, "we are mighty poor. I have hardly a groschen left, and we are bound to offer hospitality and even to pay our courtiers."

"Alas! how great a loss is Schomberg!" she answered. "I cannot cope with treasury accounts. Have we really so costly a retinue? Yes, we have a dozen Court charges, and no Court! Let us laugh and be merry; gold will come to us from one source or t'other."

"Yes," he said, "you are right; all will yet be well. But, sweeting, I have not told you all my tidings yet." He paused; she glanced at his face, and saw he had somewhat to relate which he knew would be unpleasant to her.

"What is amiss?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing—nothing, on mine honour! 'Tis only that I met the Haberstädter on the Vijverberg, and——"

"The Halberstädter!" she interrupted, and a hot flush rose to her cheek. "I will not see that roisterer in mine house."

"Dear heart," he said hesitatingly, "I could not be uncivil to a kinsman who would fain serve us well. He was very kindly and respectful to me; his sister of Nassau has ever been right friendly to us; and he is a goodly, well-looking youth."

"I will not let him come to mine house. God wot! both his mother and sister have suffered enough by reason

of his evil life. Friedrich, you have not bidden him to sup here?" she asked.

"Yes! Ah! by my soul, it has come to a pretty pass when I cannot offer hospitality when I will. Yes, madame, I have bidden Duke Christian of Brunswick, Lay Bishop of Halberstadt, to sup at mine house this day," he said, half in anger, half in pleasantry, altogether wishful to hide his embarrassment at having braved her displeasure. The Queen rose.

"Your Majesty can do as your Majesty pleases in your own house," she said haughtily.

"Oh! be not wroth, my wondrous tyrant!" he said imploringly. "'Tis only this once that Duke Christian need darken your doors, ma mie."

"You have bidden him, and he must e'en come; but I shall not speak with him," she answered, as she swept from the room in anger.

Friedrich stood silent. He could not comprehend the Queen's mood. Surely it could not harm her to sup with Christian of Brunswick? Doubtless he was famed for his wild life, but the Queen was not wont to be intolerant; many gallants of equal ill repute frequented the Hague, and she had not been thus harsh. Yet it seemed as if she had an especial grudge against the Halberstädter, as if he alone must bear the brunt of her righteous indignation. Well, the Halberstädter must sup once in her Majesty's house, and then Friedrich would eschew his company for the future. He sighed, and wandered out on the Voorhout beneath the shady lime trees, his mind full of perplexity at the whims and moods of even the wisest and best of women.

. . . . . .

The sun was setting in golden splendour, and a delicious coolness arose from the heavy dews which already lay on the flowers in the garden, while the leaves of the lime trees on the Voorhout thirstily drank in the freshness after the long glory of the spring day. In her Majesty's parlour the guests had already arrived, and were talking and laughing gaily, though all noticed the nervous rest-

lessness of the King's manner, and that Elizabeth Stuart, too, seemed less gay than usual, even a trifle ill at ease and haughty. Mevrouw van der Myle, daughter of poor Olden Barnevelt, and owner of this house which the Estates had rented for the King of Bohemia's use, stood by the Queen, and the talk was of homely details—of how Mevrouw counselled her Majesty to change Prince Hal's sleeping-room to another apartment overlooking the garden; and how in the autumn, when the damp mists rose from the canals, it would be wise to send the children away from the Hague for a few weeks. Though the Queen answered courteously, a sense that her Majesty's thoughts were really elsewhere froze the words on the good lady's lips. Amalia Solms, standing near the open window, was conversing with Frederik Hendrik, the Stadthouder's brother.

"I trust the oppressive warmth of this day hath not wearied the gracious Countess," he was saying,

"Nay, I find the Hague pleasantly cool after the furious heat of Prague," she made answer.

"I am but too happy if your ladyship finds the Hague agreeable."

Such was the courting of these most worthy persons. The human moths of the world love dully, but their grey words are doubtless poetry to them. Jacob Cats was entertaining a merry group of ladies at the farther side of the parlour. He told them quaint, homely proverbs of which his mind was the storehouse, and his kindly, wise brown eyes were alight with benignant amusement while he stroked his well-trimmed, pointed white beard. The King stood with Sir Dudley Carlton, Sir Francis Nethersole, and a few Dutch gentlemen; but his Majesty's random answers cast a chill upon the talk, and the guests began to wonder why her Majesty did not give the signal to repair to supper.

"What is wrong?" whispered Lady Carlton to Mistress Alison Hay. "Has the cook let the supper viands fall into the fire, or has the fish swum back to Scheveningen?"

"Nay, Dame Carlton," the girl answered, laughing,

"but there is another guest invited to sup—Duke Christian of Brunswick."

The good lady started. "The Halberstädter?" she said incredulously. "Well, lack-a-day! An we wait for him we shall sup at breakfast-time! He is doubtless too busy with some evil-doing to remember the hour of the Queen's supper."

As she spoke the door opened, and there entered a tall, svelt figure, in a green velvet tunic richly embroidered with gold. Duke Christian had a clear, olive complexion, and wore neither beard nor moustache; his lips were full, but they closed so firmly that in repose his mouth seemed thin and cruel. He wore his brown hair cut short, and in spite of the mode, no curling love-locks fell on the plain, if delicate, linen of his ruff. It was a proud, almost forbidding, face; the nose a trifle thick, but the nostrils were delicate and sensitive like those of a fiery, well-bred horse. The deep brown eyes were strangely sombre beneath the strongly marked black eyebrows.

He came into the room quietly with a swift, light step; then pausing, glanced round him. King Friedrich hurried forward and greeted him warmly, even ostentatiously, for his Majesty was ill at ease. The Halberstädter bowed low before this dethroned King.

"There are few greater honours than to be your Majesty's guest," he said.

"Cousin, it is a happy day for me when you honour my poor house," answered Friedrich, laying his hand affectionately on the Brunswicker's shoulder. He led him up to the Queen.

"May I present your Majesty's close kinsman, Duke Christian of Brunswick?" he said in a formal tone.

"I greet your Highness well," returned Elizabeth Stuart coldly, and without vouchsafing him a glance, she held out her hand stiffly. The Halberstädter, bending low, kissed her finger-tips reverently, almost timidly.

"Madame ma cousine, it has been the dream of my life to pay you homage," he said in a low, vibrant voice. She drew away her hand.

CHRISTIAN, DUKE OF BRUNSWICK.

From the painting by Miereveldt in the Earl of Craven's Collection at Combe Abbey

"I trust your mother, my honoured aunt of Brunswick, is well, Bishop?" she said distantly. He started.

"I can lay no claim to clerical dignity, madame," he said quickly. "I thank your Majesty, my mother is well. Did she know the honour which hath befallen me this day, she would have sent your Majesty right loving greeting." The Queen bowed coldly.

"When you return into Germany, sir, I pray you offer her Highness my humble duty," she said, and, turning away, she called to the painter Mierevelt.

"Come, mijnheer, and tell me what new marvels you have painted. Ah! instead of killing men, as soldiers do, how grand it is to make them live for ever by the magic of art!" Her whole being seemed to have changed, as in a flash. When she had spoken with the Halberstädter she had been haughty almost to insolence; with Mierevelt she was gracious, young, friendly. The Haberstädter stood silent. His eyes had grown hard; they glistened like wet pebbles from the bed of a mountain stream. After a moment he turned away and greeted Mevrouw van der Myle and Lady Carlton. They responded nervously, yet with that fluttered interest which women accord to the man of evil repute. Jacob Cats smiled.

"The virtuous dames are always flattered by the notice of the vicious man; it proves to them that they are virtuous by choice, not by necessity," he said to Nethersole who was standing near him.

At this moment the doors of her Majesty's supper parlour were thrown open.

"Will you lead her Majesty, cousin?" said the King, laying a friendly touch on the Halberstädter's shoulder. In chill silence Elizabeth Stuart gave her hand to Duke Christian, and with courtly grace they passed into the supper parlour followed by the guests.

"Mijnheer Jacob shall sit near me!" her Majesty cried, as she rose from the profound courtesy she had swept to the Halberstädter when he had brought her to the long, narrow supper table.

"Come, oh! maker of proverbs! and beguile my weariness with your wisdom," she added, laughing.

Amalia Solms and Frederik Hendrik were seated together, exchanging the commonplaces which are the mating songs of such natures. The King sat opposite Elizabeth Stuart, Frederik Hendrik on his right, and Mevrouw van der Myle on his left, Sir Dudley Carlton, Mistress Allison, Nethersole, Mistress Clovelly, Mistress Stanley, several Dutch gentlemen, the French envoy—a small, rotund personage weighted with all the importance of his busy mediocrity—Mierevelt and my Lady Phyllis. The Queen, turned towards Jacob Cats, seemed to have eyes and ears but for him; and the Halberstädter, on her right, was left to amuse himself as best he could, for my Lady Carlton, seated on his right, avoided him nervously, as though to speak with him would have spelled defilement to the neat honesty of her shrivelled, boxlike bosom, so carefully enshrined in the stiff white satin of her discreet corsage. She spoke in English with Sir Francis Nethersole, discussing English friends or mutual acquaintances, as though to have known my Lady This or my Lord That was so intimate a bond between Nethersole and her, as to be a barrier unscalable by the benighted foreigner who sat near them.

Sometimes the King's melancholy eyes strayed questioningly to Elizabeth Stuart. She was unlike herself to-night, unsmiling, formal, he thought. Ah! how irksome women were, to be sure, with their moods, their whimsies, their capricious condemnations of men! After all, what did women know of a man's life? It was ridiculous for them to judge, he argued to himself. Husband-like, in order to improve an awkward situation, Friedrich assumed a condemnatory and aggrieved manner, and succeeded thereby in permeating the already chill atmosphere with an undefined sense of discomfort. Feeling this tacit hostility, this unspoken disapproval, Elizabeth Stuart responded by a contradictory mood. Throwing off her unwonted formality, she became more than usual gay and full of talk, but she continued to address

her remarks to Jacob Cats or across the table to Mevrouw van der Myle, ignoring both the King and the Halberstädter.

Now his Majesty addressed the Halberstädter, and they were soon deep in conversation anent military matters. Throughout supper Elizabeth Stuart was aware of her neighbour's deep voice. There was something singularly winning in its quietness. Angrily she reflected that it was unmannerly of the King—really churlish of the Halberstädter—thus to discuss tactics and strategics before her.

"These German gallants think a woman cannot comprehend anything that their own addled pates have learned," she said sharply to Mijnheer Cats.

"Better that than to be ruled as slavishly as we Dutchmen are by our wives, perchance," he answered, laughing. "Why, madame, 'tis a very tyranny the good dames wield here."

"Can there be no unity, no well-balanced friendship between man and woman?" she asked, suddenly serious, half-ashamed of her hasty speech, for she knew well enough that she ruled King Friedrich absolutely.

"Nay, while the world lasts there will be but one head in a house; if you put two rulers in one kingdom the throne will soon be demolished! One must rule, madame; either the man must wear the petticoats and the dame don the breeks, or they must keep to their own rôles. There must be a man and a woman in each house, but God knows which of 'em is which sometimes," he said, smiling. She laughed.

"Well, I vow I will never talk military tactics, be I man or woman!" she said.

"People who practise home tactics seldom discuss them," he answered shrewdly. "Show me the dame who talks of gallantry, and I'll answer for it she hath ne'er been courted! I warrant your Majesty is a finer strategian, off the battlefield, than any of us are upon it!"

Against her will Elizabeth Stuart, though she bantered thus with Cats, heard the Halberstädter's quiet voice all

the time, and though she tried studiously to avert her eyes, ever and anon she glanced at his hand which he often laid upon the table. She noted how large and strong it looked; marvelled at its whiteness and the blue veins which showed so plainly on it, at the uncommon shortness of the thumb accompanying those long, pointed, nervous fingers. Through the strength of the hand there seemed to be a curious delicacy and refinement. She told herself that there was something cruel and brutal about it, and a little shiver ran through her—a shiver of disgust, as she thought.

"Madame ma cousine," came the quiet voice, "may I drink to you?"

She started and felt an unaccustomed flush invade her cheeks and mount to her brow. She turned to the Halberstädter. He was bending towards her with his glass in his hand. Suddenly she was ashamed. She had behaved like a sullen, unmannerly child, and now she was blushing like a silly hoyden, she thought.

"Monseigneur, let us drink together to another Elizabeth, to your noble mother Elizabeth of Brunswick," she said, her habitual charm of manner conquering her ill humour.

"To my mother!" he said, "and to my Queen!" he added earnestly.

She took her glass, and, according to the German mode, held it to his and the brims touched with a gentle clink; then, as she raised the glass to her lips, their eyes met for the first time, met and lingered for a full moment as they drank.

"I thank your Majesty!" he said formally and coldly; but she noticed how his strong, right hand trembled as he set down his glass, and how his left hand, which lay on the table near her, was clenched so fiercely that the blue veins stood out and the knuckles grew yellow with the force of his grip.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SUPPER IN THE WOOD

"Que se passait-il dans nos âmes?
Amour! amour!"

DURING the days following the supper the Halberstädter was a constant visitor at the house on the Lange Voorhout, and the Queen raised no protest at his presence, though, save the words of formal greeting, she rarely spoke to him; and to King Friedrich she never mentioned his name without some scornful allusion to his ill fame. It was: "Your Majesty's dear friend, the housebreaker," or "Your noble companion, the burgher's terror," "That lover of orgies, my reputable kinsman," and the like. To her ladies she vowed she disapproved of the Halberstädter.

"Think you that I am deceived by his quiet manner? He may be mighty civil, but some day we shall see a pretty scene enacted by his fierce temper," she would say. One day a story came to her ears which, she informed Friedrich, proved the Halberstädter to be a desperado and not a fit person to enter a decent house. It was recounted how, chancing to be sitting in the "Golden Head" tavern opposite the Halstraatje, he had watched a crowd of bravos quarreling; it had been a common drunken revel of no account, and surely no affair of his. However, it was said that, unable to resist the amusement of a brawl, he had dashed into the group and had laid hands on one of the men, who had turned on the intruder with the sudden fury of the drunken; whereupon the Halberstädter had shot the man down in cold blood, and, having thus sated his horrible lust, had walked calmly away whistling a tune. This exploit had occurred since

his friendship with King Friedrich, and her Majesty vowed that she would tolerate his presence no more.

"But, dearling, do not condemn a man for the sake of an unproven story," the King said. "Ask him yourself what he did. I make sure it is only a trumped-up scandal. Ask him, sweet Bess, I pray you."

"And, if he cannot disprove this sorry tale, will you vow me he shall enter this house no more?" she said. The King sighed; he had taken a marvelous liking for the Halberstädter, but, as usual, he gave in to Elizabeth.

"If this thing is true, I will have naught to do with Christian of Brunswick," he said.

That evening there was a ball at the Binnenhof, and after the second pavyn her Majesty withdrew into the deep embrasure of one of the windows overlooking the Vijver. Mistress Alison Hay and several of the Queen's other ladies followed; not my lady of Solms, for she was talking with Frederik Hendrik as usual.

"See the future of Holland," said the Queen, laughing. "Our dear Amalia will make a fitting châtelaine for this most solid and comfortable Binnenhof."

"There will be wedding-bells, I think, indeed, madame! Lord! how wearily sober a Court 'twill be!" said Mistress Alison maliciously.

"Nay, be not too harsh; they will make a goodly couple. Every kettle hath its lid, and 'twould be but a sorry thing to put a kettle lid on a porcelain jar! It often happens, alack! but then both jar and lid are ill at ease," the Queen said lightly. She glanced round the panelled room, and her eyes fell on the Halberstädter, who was standing silently leaning against the door-post. His face was grave and pale, and his eyes were fixed on Elizabeth Stuart with something so unutterably sad in their steady gaze that she felt a quick pang of compassion for this "wild desperado." As her eyes met his, he started and turned away.

"Alison, I would speak with Duke Christian of Brunswick. Ask him to come to me here," she said. The girl looked surprised, but went on her errand without comment.

"I have that to say to my cousin which only four ears may hear," the Queen said to her other ladies, dismissing them. She was alone when the Halberstädter came to her.

"Your Highness will marvel that I have summoned you," she said abruptly, and fixed her eyes full on his face. He made no response save for a deep bow.

"I have somewhat to say, and on your answer depends whether or no his Majesty and I can offer you hospitality in the future. Have I your Highness's word that I shall hear the truth?"

"Madame, among the sorry names that your Majesty has heard given me, has the title of liar been meted out?" he said coldly, but his eyes had grown hard, and she knew that no man on earth would have gone unpunished for speaking thus to him.

"Have I your word, cousin?" she repeated firmly, though it cost her an effort to steady her voice. The man frightened her, she realised with a sense of surprise.

"Your Majesty has my word of honour," he said quietly.

"I have heard the history of your brawl a few days since at the 'Golden Head' tavern. I ask your Highness if it is true?" she said.

"Perfectly true, madame," he answered calmly.

"You dare tell me openly that you interfered for no reason in a drunken quarrel; that you shot a man in cold blood, and went home whistling a merry tune?" she said. "You dare tell me this? And you came to my house an hour afterwards and were treated like an honest gentleman?"

"I interfered in a drunken quarrel, madame; and I shot a man dead before the 'Golden Head' tavern," he said proudly; "but neither did I do so without reason, nor in cold blood. The man had just beaten his dog to death, and I shot him as men shoot a mad dog. I trust I may never see such a dastard act and my blood stay cold; and I know I shall kill any man who does so foul a thing when I am by."

"That is a far different tale, sir cousin!" she cried, with

flashing eyes. "I, too, would kill—" she stopped short. "Was the dog dead? Poor beast, poor beast!" her eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, madame," he said coldly, and with a profound bow he turned and left her.

For a few moments the Queen remained alone in the embrasure, her thoughts were in a turmoil. The Halberstädter's words had struck that chord which no Stuart could resist—the chord of their passionate love of animals, and their generous wrath at whosoever lifted a cruel hand against the beloved dumb servitors of man. She knew that never again could she treat Christian of Brunswick as an outcast; no man who felt thus could be entirely vile. Then in a flash she remembered how Friedrich had wantonly ridden his horse to death——

She hurried into the crowd in the dancing-hall. "Come! let us dance a Branle à la Haye! We've had enough of the solemn pavyns! I pray you, my Lord Stadthouder!" she cried, turning to Maurice of Orange, "I pray you, order a boisterous roundel! I am weary of the stately measures!"

. . . . . .

As June wore on, the Queen seemed to have grown strangely shy of Christian of Brunswick, but her hostility of manner changed to a distant friendliness, varied even by a half-bantering, capricious tone. She often addressed him as though he were really Bishop of Halberstadt, calling him "Hochwürden," and tormenting him about his pastoral duties. The Halberstädter at first answered her, explaining that he was only the administrator of the bishopric, and that he had nought to do with church matters; but, seeing she paid no heed to his explanations, he ceased to respond. She noted that the bantering fretted him, for his brown face flushed and his eyes took that hard look "like brown-leather buttons," as she told the King one day when describing how the Halberstädter appeared when he was angry. It was evident that his displeasure added zest to her mischievous spirit, for she rallied him the more. Yet she vowed that she disapproved of

the Halberstädter, albeit she never wearied of hearing accounts of his wild life.

"What was that history concerning the husband who was flung out of the window?" she would say, and then they told her again how Christian had been surprised with the wife of the Burgomaster of Haarlem, and how this reverend personage, when he had dared upbraid his faithful spouse, had been heaved out of his own bedchamber window by the Halberstädter. The story went that Christian had been heard to say he would serve any man in the same fashion who dared offer insult to a woman in his presence, and that because a poor dame was mated with a brute it was no reason for a cavalier to stand by and hear her affronted. Still, it was an ugly tale, though there were darker ones concerning him. Nevertheless, it seemed that Elizabeth Stuart took a veritable delight in hearing of the pranks played by her kinsman; and the King had vowed him a warm admiration and friendship. Christian was all that he, Friedrich, would have wished to have been, and the reports of the Halberstädter's violence only served to increase the radiance of the aureole he wore in the King's vision; for Friedrich, being incurably mild, adored violence. Yet to pacify the Queen he was eager in his refutation of the scandalous histories. But the Queen frowned; she did not want the histories to be refuted; she certainly disapproved of the Halberstädter.

Towards midsummer evil tidings came from Prague, and into the comfortable commonplace of the life at the Hague there crept a sense of brooding disaster and sadness. The Emperor had promised full pardon to the Bohemians, if they laid down their swords and returned to their allegiance to the Empire. No hint of impending retribution was given, and though Thurn, Hohenlohe, and several other Czechish gentlemen had deemed a few years' voluntary exile to be the safer course, many had remained on their estates in Bohemia trusting in Ferdinand's promise. At first no harsh measures had been adopted towards the "repentant rebels," as they were called, but then, without

warning, they had been summoned before an Imperial tribunal at Prague, where they were accused of high treason. Old Schlick, my lord of Czernin, Budova, Harrant of Polzic, and a score of others including Doctor Jansenius, the scholar who had written King Friedrich's pamphlets concerning the Bohemian crown, were condemned to torture and death; and though they affirmed that they were conquered foes, not traitorous conspirators, the cruel sentences were consummated on the market-place at Prague. They died bravely, one and all, and though the Emperor had caused a hundred drummers to be stationed round the scaffold to drown by their noise the last speeches of the Bohemian patriots, still some faithful ones managed to hear and had delivered these last messages of loving loyalty to King Friedrich at the Hague.

A more terrible situation can scarce be imagined for an honest man than that into which Friedrich was forced. Here were men dying for him; here was an army under Mansfeld in the field in his name; and here he was bound to inaction by the promise extorted from him by King James that he would not undertake a fresh campaign while the ambassadors in Vienna were negotiating a compromise. Poor Winter King! He was doomed to the agony of uselessness. All his life he had had occupation—he had called it work—with State affairs, and now he was face to face with the emptiness of his own soul, that emptiness which idleness alone can fully reveal to us. Added to this was the bitter knowledge that the whole world either laughed at him, sneered at him, or blamed him. It was said that he had lighted a fire which consumed his friends, and that he stayed afar in safety and watched them burn. The flood of lampoons and caricatures taught him what was said of him, he could not escape knowledge of them, for they were nailed on every wall in the Hague, and lightheartedly the populace sang the refrains of the ribald, mocking songs in the narrow streets. Elizabeth Stuart, if she still caused the printed sheets to be brought to her, hid them now or did not mention them to Friedrich. Indeed, although she raged

and sorrowed at the Bohemians' cruel fate, it seemed far off to her just then. It was a new world to her, all was new —she—Friedrich—the glory of summer—all had been reborn, she knew not why. Though there were clouds enough to overshadow her, though she played her part with dignity and fitting thought for all, yet it was as though she had never lived before. She told herself that it was thus with her because the human heart reverts to joyousness and youth, all the more strongly after an o'erdarkened spell.

. . . . . .

Her Majesty of Bohemia deigned to accept the hospitality of Mevrouw van Half Wassenaar at an alfresco supper beneath the beech-trees of the Bosch. Far from the town of the Hague, deep in the wood, was an avenue of beeches, whose hoary age recalled the legend that this was the sacred grove which had surrounded a Roman temple long before the noble plaisance, the Bosch, had become the ill-famed Schalkenbosch, so named because it had been the haunt of robber bands and outlaws. But in the year of grace sixteen hundred and twenty-one the Bosch, now a wooded park, had become the resort of the fashionable world at the Hague. The burghers and their portly spouses preferred to pace at their leisure in the alleys beneath the lime-trees on the Lange Voorhout, watching the unwieldy carosses of the great lumber down the centre drive—those quaint carosses with their prancing arch-necked steeds decked with an amplitude of emblazoned trappings and with nodding plumes upon their aristocratic heads; the carosses with lumpy leather tops and leather curtains instead of glass in their windows, with finely painted panels, and with small front wheels and enormous spindly hind wheels, whose disproportion caused the clumsy vehicles to sway and jolt over the uneven road. Yet who was not proud to own such an equipage? It was the latest mode, and so costly that only the wealthy great could dream of possessing such a conveyance. The burghers' dames still went a-travelling safely strapped behind stout riders on trustworthy, cautious nags, and they

viewed with awe and delight the carosses thundering down the Lange Voorhout. Thus the Bosch was left to the ladies and gallants, and the shady glades were generally peopled by a gaily clad throng of courtly personages.

And here on that summer evening Mevrouw van Half Wassenaar's alfresco feast was to take place. The tables were spread beneath the beech-trees, in whose boughs twinkled tiny lamps, while, discreetly hidden in the wood, musicians discoursed soft melodies. The guests arrived, a galaxy of fashion, gentlemen with the newest patterns of embroidered doublets sent to them from Paris, with the latest mode of broad Spanish hat, the last-invented trick of fastening the Flemish boots around the knee; ladies who had learned that the fardingale was banished from the world, who knew that none could appear now save in voluminous flowing skirts; that the rebatoe was a moribund monster, and that in Paris the deep turned-down lace collar was the sign of a lady, not only of quality, but of fashion.

Now her Majesty of Bohemia's carosse swung down the avenue—alas! not her Majesty's own carosse, for, as all the world knew, the Winter Queen, albeit she kept a stud of horses, loving them too well to be bereft of these at least, still she owned no coaches, though by her uncle Maurice of Orange's liberality and courtesy she had the use of the Stadthouder's equipages. But what mattered it? Her Majesty was only making a short sojourn in Holland, pending her triumphal return to the splendours of Prague or of Heidelberg, And why remember unpleasant trifles —war, death, poverty, and the like—on such a summer evening and at such a merry feast? Sure, her Majesty had banished care; for how radiant she looked in her ivory satin gown, with the large lace collar which fell away and showed the pearl-like whiteness of her throat and bosom, where the blue veins traced so wondrous a poem of youth. Her brown eyes were full of light; it seemed to the Halberstädter, as he bowed over her hand when she alighted from her coach, that never had he seen her so beautiful—and that light in her eyes?

"Most reverend cousin! Ah! what a glorious feast, and yet methinks these are worldly doings for a bishop! Mevrouw van Wassenaar, you have magicked a fairyland here! Ah! see, there go Amalia and my Lord of Orange!" She was lighthearted as a young maiden this night, and, God wot, her twenty-five summers were no heavy burden to her. She seemed the youngest of all her ladies, though the quaint wisdom of her quips told that her wit had grown more subtle by the teaching of experience and of sorrow.

Even the King was merry that night, and he paid court to the ladies with so good a grace that they vowed him a pretty gallant.

Soon the supper ended, and from the wood there came the lilt of a galliard tune. It was the same melody which the wandering musicians had played at the Star Palace scarcely a year since. For a moment the Queen's gay spirit drooped.

"Ah! God! why must they let me hear that melody to-day?" she murmured; "just to-day?"

"And why not just to-day, sweet madame?" said my Lady Phyllis wonderingly. "We can never forget!" The girl's voice grew husky, and her eyes were veiled in tears.

"We must ever remember, and I would not wish to forget," said the Queen. "And yet—and yet——"

"Madame ma cousine, will you pace a measure with me?" said a deep, quiet voice. She started.

"Ah, sir! I would not dance this galliard," she said. They stood together beneath the beech-trees; my Lady Phyllis had wandered away, the other ladies were dancing, the King and a group of gallants were making merry near the supper-table. Elizabeth Stuart and the Halberstädter were alone.

"Your Majesty hath grown sad since this galliard hath rung out," he said.

"How know you that?" she answered haughtily. She drew herself a little further from him; her whole being seemed to say that her sadness or her joy was naught to him, yet she knew that she awaited his answer impatiently.

As he remained silent she glanced at him. He stood beside her immovable as a statue; she could only see his profile, for he was looking straight before him. The galliard ended, and still they stood there silently.

"Madame, I pray you pace this measure with me!" he said as another tune rang out; "or is it your Majesty's will that I should bring another gallant to crave this honour?"

"Nay," she answered; then again her mischievous spirit returned, and she cried, "and yet, Sir Cousin, since when do reverend pastors dance? Your mitre would fall off? I trow 'tis better to dance with a cavalier than with a bishop!" He turned on her suddenly.

"Enough!" he said sternly. "I have heard too much of this fool banter. I will hear no more!" His eyes had grown to a curious colour as of tarnished steel, and he held her by his glance strangely. For an instant they stood like two fierce animals preparing to fight to the death. Tall man as he was, her eyes were almost on a level with his, for she had inherited the great height of Marie Stuart. Her eyes fell before his.

"Cousin," she said with feigned lightness, "tell me, own to me, that you do but masquerade as a cavalier?" She paused; somehow she had no heart for silly quips just then, and no laughing word came to the summons of her will.

"Do you bid me to cease masquerading?" he asked, and there was that in his voice which thrilled her, making her heart to beat wildly and a rush of hot blood to throb in her temples.

"Yes," she answered, and she scarce knew that she had spoken.

"Elizabeth! Queen of my life!" he said, and he spoke more in command than in prayer. "Elizabeth, cease masquerading thou, too!"

She said no word, but she laid her hand on her white bosom as though to still her unwonted breathlessness.

"Belovèd! belovèd!" he said. She was compelled to look at him, and in that look was revealed to her why

the world, the glory of summer, why all things were new to her.

"Come and dance, cousin," she said tremulously.

"And if my bishop's mitre should fall off?" he whispered, but she made no answer save to hold out her hand for him to lead her to the dance. For an instant he looked at her, and it seemed as though his eyes drew her to him; then he took her hand quietly, but in so fierce a grasp that she almost called aloud in pain.

"Do I hurt you?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured, but she let her hand rest in his.

"Christian!" she said, and he bent to her. "Christian!" she whispered yet a second time.

CHAPTER XVII

"AS NEVER MAN HATH LOVED BEFORE"

. . . "And on
Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves;
Her lips were all my own, and—ah, ripe sheaves
Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop,
But never may be garner'd. I must stoop
My head, and kiss death's foot! Love! love, farewell!"

—KEATS.

LOVE has a calendar of his own, a strange and seemingly erratic system of counting days and hours. Sometimes he writes down a year for an hour, and sometimes into an hour he reckons joy or pain sufficient to fill long years.

For Elizabeth Stuart the summer months seemed a lifetime, and yet the days passed with the swift unreality of a dream. She was quieter than of yore; in the midst of laughter and gay talk she would grow suddenly abstracted. It was said that some new plan was afoot whereof the Queen was cognisant; it was whispered that she projected a journey to England, or that she had tidings out of Germany, which foretold her return to Heidelberg, or to Prague. Good tidings for sure, for she had grown more beautiful than she had ever been, and the throng of worshippers round her were more than ever enthralled by her glowing charm.

The twelve years' truce having expired, Maurice of Orange was occupied with preparations for a campaign against the Spaniards, and King Friedrich, over-weary of the life at the Hague, proclaimed his intention of joining Maurice's forces. Elizabeth Stuart protested vehemently; it was as though she durst not let him go. She reminded him of his promise to King James; she contended that it

was madness, for it would render useless the embassy at Vienna; she vowed that it was unsuitable for a crowned monarch to fight as though he were a soldier of fortune; she pleaded with him, she upbraided him ; she even quoted Louise Juliane's written opinion on the subject, and, when a woman quotes her husband's mother, 'tis sure she must be in pressing need of support. But, for once, Friedrich was obdurate. She had told him so often that his will was strong, that he had begun to believe it himself, and now he viewed his obstinacy as an exhibition of his forceful nature.

Albeit he did not actually pitch his tent in Maurice of Orange's camp, he spent many days with the army, and it was no unusual occurrence for him to send excuses for not returning to sleep in the house on the Lange Voorhout; there was a parade the following morning which he would fain attend—there was a muster of his squadron—there was this, there was that.

Elizabeth Stuart, as was her habit once a thing was settled, made no further demur, and the life at the Hague went on its accustomed quiet course. The Halberstädter was still in the town, being in command of a troop of Dutch horse stationed at the Hague. The first days of the King's absence he avoided the house on the Lange Voorhout, but Elizabeth Stuart told him before the King, when the latter returned, that she deemed it unkinsmanly of him thus to desert her.

"Truly, cousin, 'tis but a poor chivalry you offer me," she said. They were in the oaken parlour, the windows stood open and the evening air wafted in a fragrancy of roses. The King was dallying with the English ladies; my Lady Phyllis, seated near, held her lute upon her knee. She had been singing, and the King was laughing with her about the words of her song.

"'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may'; yes, yes, my Lady Phyllis, 'tis nigh past your first bloom. Fie! sweet Phyllis, I vow you are in the June of your life already and still unwed!" he cried.

"Your Majesty should find a gallant for me, then," she

retorted; "but you take them all away to your dull camp."

"I leave you the Halberstädter, what more can you demand? Why, sir," he said, turning to Christian, "here is a fair damosel who says she's deserted!"

"Yes, I have just told his Highness of Brunswick that 'tis unmannerly thus to flout us!" cried the Queen. "But he deems it unseemly to come hither when your Majesty is not by to control us. Ritter Christel was not thus!" she added, turning to the Halberstädter. "He was a perfect cavalier!"

"I am a soldier, madame," answered the Halberstädter gravely.

"Well said, cousin," cried Friedrich, laughing. "Nevertheless, as your superior in military rank, I command you to be on guard at my palace during my absence." The Halberstädter shot him a quick glance.

"Your Majesty shall be obeyed," he said, with a strange smile.

Thus it fell out that the Halberstädter was in constant attendance on her Majesty. Each morning they rode at the head of a gay cavalcade, passing over the Buitenhof and down the narrow streets past the Fish Market hard by the sombre Groote Kerke, and out into the smiling, canal-crossed country fields. Daily he sat at dinner and supper beside her Majesty, and her ladies whispered that the Halberstädter was becoming a second Ritter Christel. My Lady Phyllis laughingly mentioned this to the Queen —a harmless jest enough, but Elizabeth Stuart turned on her with sudden anger.

"How dare you speak thus to me?" she cried. "When will you learn that one friend can never take another's place? That is the unwisdom of jealousy! Each hath his own place in a life, and it regards no one who takes a place beside him. I hate this talk of one friend ousting another!"

My Lady Phyllis gazed at the Queen in surprise.

"Why, madame, I meant no more than a foolish jest," she said. "Only your Majesty was so harsh about Duke Christian at first."

"I am still harsh—I still deem his Highness of Brunswick—all that I said he was at first," she answered, but she avoided my Lady Phyllis' eyes, and busied herself disentangling her jewelled chain which had caught in the lace of her falling collar.

One day the Queen of Bohemia's Court (so they called the merry company which was wont to gather round the exiled Queen) had been on a gay excursion to the little town of Delft. They had wandered about the quaint streets for an hour, had marvelled at the gaunt immensity of the church tower, and then had returned in barges down the broad canal to the Hague. The Halberstädter had been more than usually silent and sombre, and Elizabeth Stuart had pestered him with a hundred jests until even my Lady Phyllis had taken pity on him, and had called him to her side. His sister, the Countess Sophie of Nassau, was of the party, and she had often glanced anxiously at her brother's clouded brow.

"Ma reine, my brother Christian is a dangerous target for the shafts of pleasantry," she had said. "I marvel that he bears it even as he does. Alack! poor, mad Halberstädter, as they call him, I think he hath found the hand that can tame him." She had spoken meaningly, but Elizabeth Stuart had hastily turned the talk to another theme.

Now the whole company was partaking of late supper at the house on the Voorhout. The Halberstädter was seated beside her Majesty. Right merrily the talk and laughter went on, and Elizabeth Stuart was in her gayest vein. Jacob Cats was there as usual, Nethersole, Frederik Hendrik, Sir Dudley Carlton, Amalia Solms, the English ladies, a few Bohemian exiles, and a number of Dutch gallants. The King was absent at the camp,

When the supper ended, of course the English ladies called for a dance, and soon the melodies of the galliard, the branle, and the couranto echoed into the stillness of the night. Elizabeth Stuart vowed it was too hot to dance, and, taking my Lady of Nassau's arm, she wandered out into the garden. The air was laden with the perfume

of the last lime-blossoms, a heavy, languorous scent. For some time the ladies paced together along the narrow garden pathways, breathing in the fragrance. Then two figures appeared in the light in the doorway.

"Ah! your Grace of Nassau, have I found the cruel truant who had vowed to tread a pavyn with me this night? A heartless desertion of a poor exiled Englishman, indeed!" cried one, as the Queen and Sophie of Nassau came in sight.

"Alack! Sir Dudley, you will not rob me of my comrade?" said the Queen, laughing.

"Yea, madame, so I will if her ladyship will retrieve the faith of faithless womanhood and dance with me," he answered stoutly. The first bars of a pavyn rang out, and the Queen waved the dancers away.

"Go and labour to divert yourselves; I will stay here with my honoured cousin of Brunswick for a space. Ah! I am right weary with our jaunt to-day!" she said. The Countess of Nassau and Carlton hurried away.

"I trust your Highness is not loth to spend a short half-hour here in the coolness with me?" Elizabeth Stuart said after a long pause, during which they had paced the short length of the garden twice. They had not spoken alone since that evening at the alfresco feast. He stood still and held out both his hands towards her.

"Love of my life!" he said, "have mercy—do not mock me now. Listen! I leave Holland soon."

"Leave Holland?" she said. "Why? Where do you go? What will you do?"

"I love a woman madly," he said in a low voice. "She is a queen, and I go to reconquer her realm for her." She laid her hands in his.

"I cannot let you go," she said tremulously. "Ah! you bid me to cease masquerading once, tell me, are you playacting now? Christian, I cannot let you go."

"Yet I must go. God! do you think I can live on for ever as I am living now?" he broke out.

"I would fain live on for ever thus," she said slowly.

"No man can bear it!" he answered fiercely; "yes,

they call me the mad Halberstädter, and I shall merit the name if I linger here. You are a woman—you are no foolish maiden—Elizabeth, do you not know that a man's love is no child's play? My love is no light thing—no boy's fancy for a pretty face! I tell you that no man can bear it!" She felt how his whole body quivered, she heard his breath come thick and fast; his grip hurt her; but she, too, held his hands almost as strongly. Through the open windows the lilt of the pavyn melody came to them and the sound of the laughing voices, but the street beyond the garden was deserted and they were alone, save for the heavy scent of the lime-blossom, which seemed to be a languorous presence breathing near them.

Slowly he drew her to him, and, gathering her hands, he held them imprisoned with both of his against his breast. They spoke no word, for passion is always silent—passion which says what no words can tell—passion whereof the poets have tried to whisper during untold ages.

They stood there immovable, held by their own rapture, and their eyes drew their souls together; their breath came fast. The pavyn was ending, the final chords rang out.

"When? Belovèd. Have mercy—tell me!" he whispered, so close that his lips almost touched hers.

"To-night," she said. "Christian—I——"

"Where is Her Majesty? She will catch an ague in this cold!" came Amalia Solms' voice, and she appeared in the doorway carrying the Queen's velvet cloak on her arm.

"Oh! madame," she cried, as she saw the Queen approaching beside the Halberstädter, "I crave your Majesty's forgiveness; you must have been chilled to death without your cloak."

"Nay," said the Queen, "I am not chilled," and she re-entered the house with a half-humorous, half-piteous smile on her lips.

. . . . . .

The Queen's bedchamber was on the ground floor, near a little door opening on to the garden. It was a spacious apartment, oaken-panelled and lofty, with a carven over-

mantel and a deep, tiled fireplace. The curtains were of that rich viol-brown velvet which the Queen loved; the hangings of the large four-posted bed were of brown, but relieved by a wealth of gold and silver, emblazoning the royal arms of Bohemia and the Palatinate, encircled by the blue ribbon of the garter.

"All that we have left of the Garter is here," the Queen was wont to say, "since my Lord King dropped the ribbon at the Strahow Gate after the battle." It was bitter to King Friedrich when she spoke thus, for he raged at the knowledge that Maximilian of Bavaria had bought the diamond Garter for a mean price from a Polish soldier, who had chanced to find the jewel, which Friedrich had lost when he had ridden back to the Hradcány Palace to bid Elizabeth Stuart fly before the Imperial conquerors. That Maximilian the Astute should own the Garter was galling to the unfortunate King.

The Queen's room was sombre; yet there was a certain repose in the tone of the whole apartment, and it suited Elizabeth Stuart, whose eyes were so strangely similar in colour to the viol-brown which she affected in her dress, as in the furnishings of her house. Then, too, the brown showed up the transparent whiteness of her skin, and the delicate flush, like to the glow of a wild-rose petal, which lay on her fresh young cheek.

That summer night, as she sat before her silver mirror, she seemed like a matchless pearl, which some ingenious jeweller had set in a sombre background to enhance the sheen of its marvelous whiteness. In the light of the waxen candles beside her mirror, she saw that her eyes were shining, that her lips were more than usual red, and she deemed that the secret in her heart must be written in letters of flame upon her flushed face for all the world to read. The tiring-woman was smoothing out the thick coils of the Queen's hair, and Elizabeth Stuart fancied that the woman's eyes scrutinised her inquisitively in the mirror.

"Ah yes!" she told herself, "she who goes from out the safe paths of life must bear the rude stare of the

curious." It struck her that her whole demeanour that night must have appeared unusual. It was her habit to be assisted in her unrobing by at least two of her ladies, but this evening she had dismissed them curtly, saying she was weary and the tiring-woman could attend to her.

"Have my ladies retired to their sleeping apartments?" she asked the woman abruptly. "Go and bid them be ready betimes to-morrow, for I would ride out early. I forgot to mention this to their ladyships." The woman went on her errand. The Queen leaned her elbows on the table and rested her face in her hands. Her cheeks burned feverishly, and her hands were cold as ice. What was she going to do—she, the mother of little Hal? No! it could never be—and yet—and yet, how delicious was this cup of life, this draught of passion which would soon be offered to her. Was she to go through the long years without knowing the joy of love? She had loved King Friedrich, and she loved him still; but it had always been duty, acquiescence, kindliness, the wish to give him what he craved. She had never been stirred by passion before; now she knew how the touch of a hand can give such rapture that all the world grows dim and far off; now she knew what Friedrich meant when he had said: "C'est du feu que tu me verses dans les veines!" She marveled he could have felt this, and that she had known nothing of it. Surely, surely this ecstasy of life should not be wasted? If God sends us rapture shall we not take it?

"Christian!" she murmured, and a tremor went through her, a tremor so potent that she drew a quick, sobbing breath as of pain. A voice came close to her, and she started violently.

"The ladies are a-bed, your Majesty. My Lady Phyllis has given commands that they should be wakened early to-morrow. The other ladies were already asleep," the tiring-woman said. Her voice sounded drowsy and affronted, as though she resented that others should slumber while she was forced to labour.

"Yes, it grows late," said her Majesty; "you may leave me now—I need nothing more." The woman looked surprised.

"Your Majesty's hair——" she began.

"I will bind it up myself later," the Queen answered impatiently. "Stay! Give me my blue velvet pelisse with the white fur; I would sit and read awhile, and there is a chill in the air." The woman brought the quaint little garment which was so much the mode just then—a velvet coat trimmed with bands of soft white fur, with loose sleeves, and fur-trimmed collar cut wide, leaving the neck free. The fashion of the rebatoe and fardingale —those stiff adorners of beauty—had made these coats necessary for the ladies who would be at ease in their hours of relaxation; and though both rebatoe and fardingale were now banished, still the mode of "the little pelisse," as it was called, continued, especially in Holland, where the painters loved to portray the gentle dames in these soft garments.

The Queen donned the "little pelisse," and seated herself near a table where lay a few books. She opened one at random; it was "Astrée," Honoré d'Urfé's romance, a pretty thing enough, and especially pleasing to those who knew that the fantastic medley of shepherds and nymphs, lovers and knights, portrayed Henry IV. of France and the personages of his Court. Yet Elizabeth Stuart had no mind for such fond histories just then. She turned the pages, and absently her eyes followed the words she saw written there; but Celadon and Astrée, Silvandre and Diane, Hylas and the rest, meant naught to her. Rather she thought how slow was the tiring-woman, who was moving about, gathering up the discarded garments and locking away the jewels.

"Can I do no more for your Majesty?" the woman asked, after a time.

"No, I thank you; that is all I need," she answered, and by an effort of will she kept her eyes on the page whereon was writ the story of the amorous Celadon. The woman curtseyed and retired, and as the sound of her footsteps died away, the Queen flung the book on the

table. At last, at last, she was alone, and now she must decide upon her course. Decide? Alas! she knew that her decision was already taken; she could not give herself to the Halberstädter. Yet why had she whispered that word "to-night" to him? She was no silly wench who could pretend to innocent rashness; she had known full well what he craved. With a rush of thrilling passion she knew, too, what she desired—but it could never be, she told herself. Ah! why could she not plead weakness before the tribunal of her own judgment? Despairingly she knew that she was strong—despairingly she knew that she must cheat the man she loved—cheat him, for when she had bidden him to come to her it had been a tacit promise—a consent.

For a moment she thought she would not unlatch the little garden door; she would fasten her casement, draw the curtains round her bed and feign sleep, and when he came he would wait awhile in the moonlit garden, and then go—go for ever.

No! she could not do this—she could not face the lifelong knowledge of his hatred and scorn. This one thing must be hers, this, that he should hold her in his arms—that she should know his kiss—that she should confess her passion to him. She told herself that this would be no crime—no disloyalty to Friedrich—only this once—only this once!

She sprang up and went quickly along the short passage to the garden door, unlatched it, and sped back, leaving her own door ajar. Her casement was open, and the scent of the lime-blossom stole in. The night was far spent, and already there was a chill in the air which heralded the dawn. She heard a swift step without in the garden. Instinctively she turned away and leaned against the oaken shelf of the fireplace. She closed her eyes, her whole being trembled, and a shudder ran over her shoulders, for she knew that in an instant his touch would come upon her. She was breathless, quivering; her hands were icy cold and feeble like those of a swooning woman.

"Elizabeth! Belovèd!" she heard him whisper.

She remained immovable.

"Elizabeth," he said again, and she felt him near her. Then came the touch wherefore she had waited, and a thrill went through her from head to foot.

"Christian," she said, and turned to him swiftly. Their eyes met—lingered—his look travelled down from her eyes to her lips—then, while the universe stood still for her, while her pulses fluttered, halted, and the blood seemed to ebb from her heart, she felt his lips claim hers.

It was as though her consciousness floated deliciously, as if time and space had vanished and the world held only that potent thrill which burned and froze at once. Slowly he drew away from her—drew away, for her lips clung to his, and as they parted her breath drank his, as if half dead with thirst, she sought to drain at one draught the passion's elixir which only his being could bestow upon her.

Long they leaned together there, his arm supporting her, for else she was so weak—so wondrous weak—that she would have fallen.

Then he drew her to her chair and, kneeling beside her, kissed her uncoiled hair, buried his face in it, breathed in its fragrancy; then took her hand and kissed her fingers, crushed the palm against his mouth, and growing bolder, pressed his lips along the smoothness of her bare, white arm, until the pushed back sleeve defended the softness of her shoulder. Grown bolder still, he parted the lace upon her bosom, and kissed her breast, where the blue veins wandered like the mysterious pathways of some passion's paradise. His kisses fell on the whiteness of her slim throat until, in frenzied rapture, his lips met hers once more, and they knew the eternity of a kiss—that eternity which, alack! is so soon ended.

Softly through the open casement, past the hangings of viol-brown velvet, came the breath of the lime-trees and the rustle of the almost imperceptible night-breeze in the leaves. All the world was asleep save Elizabeth and Christian and the summer night.

She leaned against his arm and gazed into his face.

"Christian, why have you made me love you?" she asked. He bent his head, and for answer drew her closely to him, and once more she felt how he trembled. When he released her she asked him again:

"Why have you made me love you? Silent one, answer me."

"Because there is only you on earth," he said. "Because you had to love me."

"That is no answer," she said, with a little laugh.

"Oh! woman that you are! why must you ask that which no one can tell?" he said. "I love you as never man hath loved before, and that is why you love me."

"So many have loved me, but I have never——" she began.

"How dare you tell me that?" he broke out fiercely. "No one has ever loved you save I—no one; do you hear?" His eyes dominated her, and she repeated as in a dream:

"No one has ever loved me save you, Christian; that is why I am yours."

He stood up and imperiously raised her to her feet; then once more he held her against his breast, so that she rested there.

Suddenly she put him from her, gently yet firmly.

"Listen to me," she said in an altered tone. "Christian, I love you more than life itself, and all my being cries out to be yours. I am yours, heart and soul and thought; your kiss is life, your touch is fire, but this cannot be—I cannot—Oh! belovèd, do you understand?"

He stood before her, and for a moment she feared him as a victim fears, and in a flash she realised that if he took her by force she would not resist.

"Christian—Christian, have mercy upon me!" she said, and held out her hands towards him. "No man would believe me—you, even you, will not—but to be yours—God knows that every drop of blood in me burns as yours does—but I cannot——"

He took her hands with ineffable tenderness.

"Why, oh! love of mine! why?" he said very gently.

"If Friedrich were less cruelly treated by destiny I should not have the strength to say you nay," she said brokenly, "but now my pity conquers my love. No, do not misunderstand, for Christ's dear sake, belovèd—Christian, I love only you on earth, yet my pity stands between me and the fairest happiness I shall ever dream of."

He gathered her to him as though she had been a tired child, and she lay against his heart. Her hand stole up and touched his face softly.

"Loved one!" she said in a low voice. "I have cheated you—it is a great cruelty which I am doing you. Alas! I know it, and yet I could not deny myself this one hour of joy. How could I let you go from me without telling you that I loved you—without knowing the rapture of your kiss?"

"In your strange logic what is the difference between this and——"

"Oh! cannot you understand?" she cried passionately; "alas! no man could, and I am dealing you agony when I would fain give you heaven!"

"Can it never be?" he pleaded. "Never? Never?"

"How can I tell you? do not ask me that! But yes, I can answer you, Christian—never while the King is thus unhappy," she said.

"Then if I win back a kingdom for him?" he asked.

"Nay," she answered, "I can make no bargain with destiny. But this remember, that I love you—love you with all the passion there is on earth."

Once more their lips met, and she grew weak.

"Go—belovèd—as you are strong—have mercy—go and leave me," she whispered.

He turned away, went to the window and stood there silent.

"Christian!" she said. "Tell me that you do not hate me for this."

He came to her once more; his face was white and set, and his eyes gleamed with the torture of his self-control.

"I love you," he said. "Having kissed your lips how

can I ever forget? Elizabeth—you bid me have mercy upon you—do you know what you ask?"

"I know full well, Christian," she murmured, with her hands hiding her face.

He flung himself down beside the chair where she was cowering; he tore her hands from before her face, and kissed her madly,

"Go—Christian! Some day, perchance—but now in mercy go!" she moaned. "Go—if you love me."

He sprang up, and she gazed at him almost with awe, for in the place of the lover she saw a man whose face expressed a grandeur—a sternness of renunciation which made of him a being isolated in his nobility.

"Because I love you," he said gravely, "because I love you as no man hath ever loved, I leave you now." He stood a moment before her, then turned; and it was as though agony had suddenly blinded him, for he groped his way with outstretched arms. On a little table near the door her glove was lying, and his hand touched it. He started, snatched it up and pressed it to his lips, then hid it against his heart, and stumbling like a drunken man, passed out of the room.

"Christian—come back to me!" she called breathlessly. "I cannot let you go—come to me——" But he did not hear.

The garden door fell to with a little gentle click. Elizabeth heard uneven steps on the pathway, and then she was alone with the fragrance of the lime-blossoms, and the memory of his kiss burning on her lips. She went to the window, and drew back the heavy viol-brown velvet curtain. The garden was silent—Christian had gone. Already the grey of dawn streaked the sky, and the lime-trees seemed like tall priests celebrating some mysterious rite of the sacrament of renascent day.

With infinite sadness Elizabeth Stuart realised that the night was past—this one night wherein she had touched the brim of the cup of life—this night wherein she had renounced passion for ever.

. . . . . .

The dawn had broken, and already the labyrinth of streets surrounding the markets were peopled with a hurrying stream of fisherwomen from Scheveningen with barrows laden with that silver of the sea, the glittering mass of fish; with gardeners bringing fresh vegetables; with peasant-women bearing baskets of eggs, or wheeling little carts filled with round cheeses either golden-rinded as some strange fruit of tropic climes or of clotted cream in massy yellow cakes. It was all commonplace enough, but it was touched with the poetry of early morn, and it charmed the eye with the varying colours of the merchandise and the quaintness of the costume of the sellers. The grim walls of the Groote Kerk and the quaint gables of the Rathaus showed mysterious and forbidding against the grey of the sky. Yet, all undismayed, the booths clustered beneath the church's gaunt walls, clinging there insolent with the sanction of long custom.

There were buxom, laughing fisherwomen with short, bunchy, blue skirts, coloured aprons, and kerchiefs tied over the shining metal snoods which encircled their sun-bleached hair, their ruddy arms bare almost to the shoulder, and their feet encased in seafarers' heavy boots, or clumsy wooden sabots; there were bearded fishermen with blue jerkins, high boots, and knitted caps; peasant women in the distinctive costume of their villages.

Suddenly, into this homely, busy scene strode a black-cloaked figure, a tall, slight man with a felt hat pulled down over his eyes. The market-people saw the diamond buckles flashing on his shoes, and noted that, where the cloak fell away, the sheen of a satin doublet betrayed this cavalier to be no early riser but a belated roisterer returning from some nocturnal revel. Nevertheless the eager vendors besieged him with demands to buy.

"See, mijnheer, the excellent carrots! Will you not bring a bushel home for the stew-pot?" one cried.

"Here, pretty sir!" called an old dame with a basket of green vegetables and flowers, "buy a posey for your good dame," and she thrust into his face one of those tightly bound flower bunches which peasants love.

"Mijnheer! mijnheer! Butter or fresh milk! Let me carry a pail for your little ones at home!"

With an angry gesture the man pushed on. He was silent before the vendors' importunities, but they followed him, for a gallant was fair game for pleasantry if caught wandering through the town at dawn.

"Here are ripe apricots; they are refreshing after tavern drink, Sir Nightbird. Buy some!" a forward garden-wench called, and clutched at the intruder's cloak.

"Your pardon, juffrouw; I have no need of your good merchandise," he said hoarsely, and lifted his broad felt hat from his brow in a courteous salute. The girl fell back, dragged by a man's heavy hand.

"'Tis the Halberstädter, let him be," he said gruffly. Who did not know the mad Halberstädter? He was famous as the devil himself in the Hague, and more easily recognised.

They let him be, and he stormed on. Hell itself was in his heart, and written on his face was such despair that even the stolid people shrank back from him now that he forgot to draw his hat over his brow.

"Who knows from what shameful orgy he comes?" they whispered. "Who can tell to what fierce deed he hurries?"

The chime of the Groote Kerk jangled out its cracked tune; then came the deep voice of the church clock proclaiming the hour solemnly. Ah, God! Could it be but two hours since he had held Elizabeth Stuart in his arms? Could it be that in so short a span of time he had exchanged the hope of rapture for the certitude of despair? He was indeed an outcast now. What remained to him but madness, shame, death?

"The mad Halberstädter! Oh, protect me!" called a pert maiden in feigned coyness. He stopped suddenly and glared at her.

"Oh! Lud 'a mercy! what fierce eyes! You looked not thus when you kissed me at the kermess last year," she said.

"Kissed you! God in heaven! kissed you!" he cried wildly.

"Alack! he is quite mad, the Halberstädter!" she sighed, and turned to some rude bantering with a group of loiterers.

"'Tis only Mera Loon, the forward hussy!" muttered an aged crone.

Yes, he told himself bitterly, he had had truck with such baggages as Mera Loon—he had squandered his kisses on such wantons—he was smirched body and soul, and it had been defilement for Elizabeth Stuart when he had kissed her lips. And yet she loved him! But could she know how debased he was, she would turn from him in horror. In his pain he essayed to deny her purity, and even as the ugly thought came to him he loathed himself for it, saw himself as a sacrilegist.

For long he had wandered aimlessly in the narrow streets, like to some wounded animal ever circling feebly, feverishly on its own tracks. He had passed beneath the windows of slumberous burghers, who, perhaps, had turned lazily in their wainscoted wall-beds hearing his restless tread.

On, past the markets he hurried, and out into the stillness of the Bosch. He hardly knew what he did—was scarcely conscious that he strode onward. The silence in the wood came like a soothing hand on his racked heart. Instinctively he took his way to the beech grove where he had stood with Elizabeth Stuart that night of the alfresco feast; and here his madness left him, and he flung himself face downwards on the cool, damp moss. For a space he lay there as one dead, then his agony and the sense of his physical defilement reawoke and he wept wildly, painfully, finding no assuagement in tears, as women do, but rather the added torture of the acknowledged abasement which weeping brings to the strong man.

"To what shameful orgy goes the mad Halberstädter?" they had said. Alas! *this* was his orgy—*this* was the feast of life which destiny held for Christian, the mad Halberstädter, who loved, as he had said, as never man had loved before.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HERO OF FLEURUS

"Tout pour Dieu et pour elle!"

WHEN King Friedrich returned from the camp he was vehement in his displeasure at the Halberstädter's absence. Why had he gone, and where? It was unmannerly to have departed without bidding his friends adieu. Friedrich took it as a personal affront. The Queen made scant reply to Friedrich's questions; she averred that she really knew naught of the Halberstädter; the night before he left he had been at supper at the house on the Lange Voorhout, more she could not say.

"You were most likely harsh to my poor friend—I cannot comprehend why you always treat him so ill," the King said querulously. For once the Queen made no answer to his fretful speeches.

He betook himself to the Countess of Nassau, Christian's sister, and complained of the Halberstädter's sudden departure; but here too he was met with vague responses.

"I begin to mislike the Countess. She assured me that Christian has gone to Brunswick to enrol troops in my service, but she had a meaning smile on her lips; I am near sure she knows the reason of his leaving without bidding me farewell," he grumbled to Elizabeth Stuart.

"I doubt whether her Highness hath more knowledge thereon than you have, dear my lord; but women's wits are quick," she answered. "Your friend is gone; must your Majesty inquire further?"

For a few days the King kept to his grievance; and who can tell what it cost the Queen to hide her impatience, into which was mixed an agony of regret, but which she had, perforce, to mask for fear of betraying herself.

Then there came an envoy from King James; and his mission, by giving Friedrich real cause for annoyance, quelled his discontent with his friend the Halberstädter. The English envoy had been despatched to remonstrate with King Friedrich upon his imprudence in joining Maurice of Orange's camp. In vain the unlucky monarch pleaded that 'twas no shame for a German Prince to bear arms in a famed commander's army, King James had forestalled this argument by most excellent reasoning: How could an ambassador, however skilled, negotiate peace for a prince actually in arms against Austria? How could an emperor, however inclined to leniency, pardon an ex-king and lift the ban from a prince who thus openly showed his intention of recommencing hostilities on the first opportunity? King James refused to spend money on maintaining so futile an enterprise; and further, if Friedrich did not immediately conform to his fatherly advice by leaving the camp and keeping quiet in the Hague, the thirty thousand English pounds which had been promised to Elizabeth Stuart would not be paid.

"Let my father keep his gold!" cried the Queen, thoroughly aroused by this ungenerous threat. "We will ne'er be bribed." But alack! Friedrich knew that his treasury was empty, knew, too, that the monthly sum voted by the States-General was all insufficient to pay the outstanding debts in the Hague. It was not enough that Fate had dealt him failure, the humiliation of penury was his as well. Though poverty is in itself no shame, it brings manifold mortifications to a proud spirit. Elizabeth Stuart offered to sell her jewels. She was told that in war-time rubies, diamonds, and pearls were dross; who would buy baubles then?

"Can I not pawn them?" cried her Majesty. "I have heard that when none will buy it is always possible to pawn jewels."

"It is unfitting for a Princess Palatine to pawn anything," said Friedrich pompously. "Where learned you such things?"

"What matters it where I learned them? And why

should it be unfitting? Is it a better pride to accept a bribe?" she asked scornfully.

Yet resistance was useless, and after days of argument, Friedrich gave in, promised obedience, relinquished his command under Maurice, and the thirty thousand pounds were paid.

Each day saw the arrival of many refugees at the Hague, men who had served King Friedrich in Bohemia, ruined gentlemen from the Palatinate, whose lands had been devastated by the Spaniards, and even more piteous still, such men as the Lord of Schönaich, he who had befriended the unfortunate monarch in his dire need in Silesia. It was treason to shelter a man under the ban of the empire, be he robber or king, and all those who had not turned from Friedrich and Elizabeth in their misfortune were declared rebels and their lands were sequestrated by imperial decree. Schönaich, for example, had been expelled from his house, and had been permitted to bear away nothing save his Bible and his staff.

"It is thus that the man of God should go forth!" shouted the soldiery in cruel mockery when the aged lord had craved permission to take at least a change of raiment with him into exile.

"Aye!" he had answered proudly, "I go forth with a quiet heart, for he who suffers for his King suffers for his God, and God will never forsake him."

There were many sad histories of this kind; there were many brave gentlemen who sacrificed all in a spirit of absolute simple faith. These were the pawns in that vast game of chess where the kings and bishops were moved ruthlessly on the board by the colossus "Ambition" masked as "Religion," playing against the giant "Retention" in cowl and gown and masquerading as "The Faith."

The Hague was the refuge of all political victims, and King Friedrich's ill-supplied treasury was strained to the last groschen to support them. Sternly King James wrote, bidding Friedrich reduce his Court, but how could he leave

men to starve who had lost all in his service? Friends and adherents in England sent small sums or gifts of cloth, linen, books, or wine to Elizabeth Stuart, but such things were insufficient to maintain a Court of over three hundred persons.

"Courage! 'tis only an o'er-darkened span of time!" the Queen told herself, for it was impossible to believe that a Prince Palatine should long be deprived of his lands and revenues—he, the richest potentate in Germany to whom the Rhine toll belonged. Was not "Rich as he who owns the Rhine toll" a familiar figure of speech denoting enormous wealth?

. . . . . .

In the spring of 1622 her Majesty of Bohemia gave birth to a daughter, and Friedrich importuned her to pray the Halberstädter to be the infant's sponsor. Elizabeth Stuart was lying in her velvet-hung bed, above her head were the emblazonad emblems of Bohemia, encircled by the blue ribbon of the Garter. The Queen's face was fragile and flower-like beneath the heavy waves of her chestnut hair, and her white hands seemed to have gained an added delicacy—a pathetic transparency. At the foot of the bed crouched two small, brown monkeys —Jacky, very old and grey nozzled now; and Master Abraham, as her Majesty had named the new monkey, much to Friedrich's half-amused annoyance, for he knew the Queen mocked Abraham Scultetus by thus naming a monkey after him.

The King stood beside the bed; he was very gentle to Elizabeth Stuart, with an almost timid tenderness, as one who would say: "You have given me all things; I, too, give you all, and yet you have so much more to give that my gift seems paltry." It was, perhaps, by this humility, by this appealing, unspoken avowal of weakness, that Friedrich held Elizabeth Stuart's tenderness, despite his querulous pomposity and his assumption of superiority. She loved him patiently, as a woman loves an ailing child; she was true to him because it had been her destiny that this childlike being should be her "man," though

he could never have been her mate! But to consider that would have been disloyal, and a smirch on him in her sight; and though sometimes she remembered, and her soul grew weary and empty for a moment, she always turned away her thoughts; also, it was useless, and thoroughly English in this, she eschewed the useless instinctively.

"Let me have those silly beasts removed, dear heart," the king said, as the playful monkeys rolled over like little wrestlers; "they are crumpling your coverlet."

"They are well enough, and they divert me," she answered carelessly.

"Nay, they weary you, and I cannot allow you——" he began.

"Oh! for the dear Lord's sake, leave them be," she said with sudden irritation. "I must know best what wearies me. Nay, be not wounded, Friedrich; come, give me your hand and tell me of other things," she added hastily, as he drew back offended.

He smiled; ah! how piteously childlike women were with their whimsies and their uncalled-for moods, yet 'twas surely the man's rôle to humour them, he thought.

"I have spoken to you before, sweeting, of my wish for Christian of Brunswick to be this new little maiden's godfather," he said, "and I would fain write this day to tell him we have chosen him."

A hot flush flooded the Queen's cheek,

"Why must you insist on this?" she asked quickly; "you know I do not wish it."

"But I wish it, dearling; and sure you can have naught against my choosing my friend for my child's sponsor?" he answered. "You can name the other gossips for the babe —you know I have no unreasoning dislikes as you have!"

"Why do you think that my cousin of Brunswick would wish to be the child's sponsor? What can it be to him?" she said in a low, uncertain voice.

"You know full well that he will account it an honour. And, indeed, are we sunk so low that none should care to be our child's gossip?" he said bitterly.

"That hath naught to do in the matter," she said.

"It hath—it hath!" he cried vehemently. "You, too, even you, seek to humble me."

"Ah! Friedrich, I humble you? I?" she said, and the tears rose in her eyes. Ah! if she could but tell him—make him understand.

"Friedrich, do not ask the Halberstädter," she whispered. She felt that it would be a cruel irony to ask Christian to be sponsor to Friedrich's child—it would be a mockery of his pain, of his renunciation, and a hidden outrage to Friedrich himself, though he would never know it.

"You go too far," he burst out angrily, "Your dislike of the Halberstädter makes you unjust. The child is my child after all, and if I choose to assert my authority, I can do as I will."

She nodded. "Yes, the child is your child after all," she said in a strange, quiet voice.

"So you consent? That is like your gentleness, sweet Bess," he said, and bending, kissed her on the brow; "and now I go to write to Christian, to acquaint him with the honour I would pay him," he added, and left her.

For a long time she lay there silent. The casement stood open, and from the Lange Voorhout came the sound of voices and laughter and the rumbling of a carosse. A light breeze stirred the velvet window-curtain, and a freshness of spring was wafted in from the trim garden. A bird twittered in the lime-trees, where the foliage wrought a delicate tracery beneath the clear azure of the spring sky.

"The child is his child after all," she repeated slowly to herself. "Christian—Christian! Will you know that tis not *I* who deal you this stab? Will you know that *I* do not mock you at least?"

. . . . . .

For many months but scant direct news of the Halberstädter came to the Hague. He was in Brunswick, and had issued a manifesto calling to arms all able-bodied men. The Protestant princes affected ignorance of his doings, though the Halberstädter declared that he armed

in defence of the threatened Reformed faith, and appealed to all the Protestant rulers to aid him. By December 1622 he had a troop of two thousand men, recruited chiefly from Halberstadt and Brunswick, and both armed and victualled at the Halberstädter's expense.

He was confronted with the refusal of the Landgraf to allow him passage through Hesse, and of his own brother, Friedrich Ulrich of Brunswick, who forbade him to march through his territories. He saw clearly that to join Mansfeld in the Palatinate, which was of course his object, he must fight his way through Protestant countries, as though his path had been set in an enemy's lands. Now he threw off the disguise and openly avowed that he fought in the cause of Friedrich, King of Bohemia; that his first object was to save the Palatinate, and that in Friedrich's cause was included the hope of Protestantism. Hitherto his motto had been: "Gottes Freund, des Pfaffen Feind," but now he bound a woman's glove on his helmet with the device: "Tout pour Dieu et pour elle." Thus Christian of Brunswick proclaimed himself Elizabeth Stuart's champion, and thus she learned that he still dreamed of conquering Friedrich's kingdom for her sake, and she thrilled remembering when he had taken the glove which he wore so proudly on his helmet. It seemed to her that, though he sent no word, yet this was his message—a message of forgiveness. Peradventure, it told, too, of a mad hope in his heart—had he not said: "And if I reconquer a kingdom for him —?" Resolutely she put the thought from her; she had told him she could drive no such bargains with destiny!

The Halberstädter stormed through the land, captured Soest, and threatened comfortable ecclesiastical cities. "If your worships fear fire, rapine, and death, pay me a hundred thousand thalers," he told the Jesuits of Paderborn, and they opened their gates, implored for mercy, and paid the Halberstädter his hundred thousand thalers to leave them in peace.

He thundered on, took Münster, received more gold in return for hindering his men from plundering the wealthy

town, and, like a scourge, he passed on triumphant. It was not his plan to settle into some impregnable fortress; he must gather gold and recruit men, and join Mansfeld in the Palatinate. Already his name inspired such terror that when he appeared before a town the citizens, of their own accord, opened their gates and sued for mercy, offering him solid compensation for his renunciation of plunder.

Now the aim of the whole Catholic army was to crush this reckless enemy with his small force of some three thousand men, Anholt, the Bavarian General, pursued him and drove him back into Westphalia. Even the Halberstädter dared not attack so mighty a foe, and by April he was forced to retreat to Lippstadt; but in May he suddenly appeared before the walls of the ecclesiastical town of Fulda, commandeered four hundred thousand thalers, and then marched on and invaded the bishopric of Mainz. A panic seized the Bishop's garrison in Ursel, and they evacuated the town without offering resistance to the Halberstädter, who made a triumphal entry and decided to spend a few weeks in Ursel to repose his weary troops. But the news that Anholt with a large force had arrived in the neighbourhood caused him to push on, in the hope of capturing the town of Mainz. Here, too, both garrison and inhabitants fled at his approach, and he occupied a deserted, though well-provisioned, town. So far Christian with his handful of men had carried all before him, and he sent a glowing account of his success to his sister at the Hague, who hurried to the Queen with the glad tidings.

But Tilly with a Bavarian army, and Cordova with a large Spanish force, were at Aschaffenburg, thus blocking the road between the Halberstädter at Mainz and Mansfeld, now at Mannheim. Towards the middle of June Tilly advanced past Frankfurt. The Halberstädter knew himself to be outnumbered by at least six to one, but he prepared for battle, instead of slipping across the river Main and making for the Palatinate. His council of war prayed him to follow this course, but who could expect the Halberstädter voluntarily to order a manœuvre which

would appear so like flight? He believed that God would give victory to the champion of Elizabeth Stuart, and the danger of the enterprise but added to his zest. Then, too, his army had grown, for several thousand men had flocked to his standard during the last weeks, and he longed to pit his prowess against such famed commanders as Tilly and Cordova. He left Mainz, and attacked the Imperialists near the township of Höchst. Immediately Tilly's well-directed fire swept the Halberstädter's cavalry from the field, and the Brunswick infantry was thrown into disorder by their comrades' rout; also the three cannon, which was Christian's whole artillery, proved useless: one gun burst, the other was immediately shattered by the enemy, and the third was no match for the steady fire of Tilly's numerous cannon. Nevertheless, for six hours the desperate hand-to-hand fight continued, before the Halberstädter would sanction the withdrawal of his troops, and when he at last consented, the discouraged, weary soldiery were incapable of orderly retreat; they broke line and fled, and were hewn down by the Bavarians and Spaniards. Christian forded the river and endeavoured to rally his scattered troops for another attack; but seeing that his army was decimated to half the original number, he at length decided to take advantage of the fact that Tilly had ceased to pursue him, and marched southwards to join Mansfeld. For Tilly, fearful that the "mad Halberstädter's" retreat was only a feint, had left the road to Mannheim open. The battle of Höchst was a crushing defeat for Christian, and yet the object of many months of strategy was thereby attained: Christian and Mansfeld were together, and the Imperialists were confronted by a powerful antagonist indeed.

Friedrich could no longer endure the enforced inaction in the Hague, when he heard that the armies of the Halberstädter and of Mansfeld were united. It meant that a campaign was imminent which would decide the fate of the Palatinate and the future of Protestantism. It was evident that James's Ambassador in Vienna was being duped by the Emperor, whose continued procrastination

had at length undeceived King James. Obviously Ferdinand had no intention either of removing the ban from Friedrich, or of restoring the Palatinate to him. A friendly letter received about this time by Elizabeth from the Infanta Isabella, superscribed: "To the Countess Palatine, Princess of Great Britain," confirmed the impression that the Imperial party was decided to withhold from her even the title of Electress. Further negotiations were useless—the sword must decide.

Friedrich left the Hague, and, disguised as a peasant, journeyed to the army. It was a perilous undertaking, for he had to pass through large tracts of country held by the enemy, and he was constantly stopped and questioned by patrolling Imperialists. Once at nightfall in a village hostelry he was interrupted at supper by a company of Bavarians, who invited the young peasant to drink with them.

"What smooth hands the youth has got!" they said suspiciously. "Are you a gallant in disguise, perchance, Master Yokel?"

But Friedrich succeeded in making them believe that he had been ill for months in France, and was now returning to his family near Heidelberg.

"Are you a heretic, and a friend to the fool Friedrich?" they asked, and when he hesitated they bade him drink to the downfall of all heretics, usurpers, and enemies of Austria. He complied; yet this did not satisfy his tormentors, and they bid him vow that Friedrich of the Palatinate was no lord of his, but a sorry knave and a "sheep's head." To this the unfortunate King answered with so forcible an assertion of Friedrich's imbecility, wrongheadedness, and weakness that the half-drunken soldiery let him go, after clapping him roughly on the back, and proclaiming him to be a right good fellow holding sound opinions.

He reached the army at Germersheim in the Palatinate, where he found the confederate generals, the Halberstädter, Mansfeld, and the Markgraf of Baden-Durlach, united in name, but entirely divided in spirit. Friedrich's

advent did little to improve matters, though he assumed the nominal command of the three contingents.

The Imperial forces meanwhile had withdrawn southwards, and Friedrich decided to pursue them into Alsatia. Here he found a devastated country; the plundered villages were smoking ruins, the peasants had fled, the Imperialists had carried away all provisions. At the town of Zabern the Protestant army came upon the first resistance to their unhindered pursuit. The Halberstädter and Mansfeld laid siege to Zabern which, though bravely defended by the Imperial garrison and the citizens, would have been easily captured, when to the surprise and consternation both of the generals and of the whole army, Friedrich suddenly commanded the cessation of hostilities and called a council of war. He now announced that he had received despatches from the English and Danish envoys in Vienna, and that the Emperor had declared he could not even consider the petition of a prince in arms against him. Friedrich informed the Council that the envoys having implored him to abandon the campaign, he had decided to disband his army, to dismiss Mansfeld and the Halberstädter from his service, and to throw himself upon the Emperor's mercy.

So unwarrantable a desertion on the brink of success seemed incredible to the Halberstädter and Mansfeld; but when they saw that Friedrich, with the obstinacy of the weak, intended to adhere to this decision they turned from him in scorn.

"Let him go where he will!" cried Mansfeld bitterly. "I had liefer serve a knave than a weakling." Christian of Brunswick said nothing; he walked away from the tent where the council of war had been held; for two days none saw him, and it was bruited abroad that the mad Halberstädter had killed himself in his anger at King Friedrich's desertion. But on the third morning he came quietly into Mansfeld's tent, and opened a discussion on a question of camp discipline, as though nothing untoward had occurred.

The Halberstädter and Mansfeld found themselves in a

desperate strait; dismissed from the service of the man in whose name they had undertaken the campaign, they had become bandits, marauders in an impoverished country, and being without funds to pay their men they could not disband the army. They proposed now to sell their swords and their troops to the highest bidder. King Friedrich meanwhile was safe, though an unwelcome guest, at Sedan with the Duke of Bouillon.

The Protestant adversary now paralysed, the Imperialists returned to the Palatinate, seized Mannheim, wreaked their vengeance upon the defenceless inhabitants, burned, pillaged, harried the whole countryside, and laid siege to Heidelberg.

Mansfeld, indifferent as to whom he served so long as he could practise the remunerative art of warfare, entered into negotiations with the Emperor; but Ferdinand, not needing reinforcements at that time, refused the offer of the Protestant ex-leader. Louis XIII. sought to gain both Mansfeld and Christian, to employ them against the turbulent Huguenots, but the Halberstädter vehemently refused to draw sword against his co-religionists. The Infanta Isabella, Governess of the Netherlands, offered two hundred thousand crowns for the two generals and their army; but Mansfeld found the sum insufficient, and Christian would not fight against Maurice of Orange and a Protestant army. There remained the Duke of Bouillon at Sedan, who was secretly gathering together all malcontents to join in the Huguenots' struggle against order and Catholicism under the King of France. Maurice of Orange, hard pressed in the Netherlands, offered six hundred thousand gulden to Mansfeld and Christian. The besieged town of Bergen op Zoom could hold out but little longer against Spinola and Cordova with their large Spanish forces, and Maurice realised that even genius and well-trained troops could not contend for long against overwhelming numbers. But Cordova blocked the way between the Netherlands and Alsatia, and the Halberstädter and Mansfeld, not considering their forces sufficient

to risk an encounter with so large an army, decided to march to Sedan.

On their way thither they made a pleasant little detour on the French frontier, sacked the Abbey of Verdun, and beleaguered Pont à Mousson. There was panic in France, and in Paris it was said that the "German robbers" were making for the capital itself. Bouillon would join his secret allies, and the whole of France would quickly fall into their hands. To hinder this dangerous union of Mansfeld and Bouillon, Louis XIII. despatched an envoy to Mansfeld offering him an enormous bribe to desert the Protestant cause and enter the service of the King of France. Mansfeld hesitated; his troops were on the point of mutiny, for they had lately reaped but a scant harvest of plunder from the impoverished countries they had occupied. The Halberstädter, albeit he presently remained before Pont à Mousson with Mansfeld, refused to continue a course of dissimulation and indecision, and announced his intention of leading his own troops direct to Sedan to join Bouillon. Mansfeld discovering that, while the negotiations between himself and the French Crown hung fire, there was an understanding between France and Cordova, and when he heard that the latter was marching to Pont à Mousson, decided to have done with France, both Catholic King and Huguenot Duke, and to hurry to the aid of Maurice of Orange in the Netherlands. The Halberstädter agreed to this, and the approach of the enemy Cordova having banished the mutinous spirit in Mansfeld's army, the two camps were raised, and the Protestant army commenced a forced march northwards. By the end of August 1622 the Halberstädter arrived at Fleurus on the borders of the Spanish Netherlands, and found that Cordova, having outmarched him on the eastward line, had effectually blocked the road to Maurice of Orange. Mansfeld endeavoured to effect a truce, and offered Cordova a bribe to allow him to pass; but the Spaniard refused, well knowing that the bribe, though alluring on paper, had not its counterpart in solid gold, for neither the Halberstädter nor Mansfeld owned a quarter of the sum offered. It was an unpleasant

situation for the Protestant leaders. Cordova's army was not only larger than theirs, but he had already seized the best strategic position. Also he had a number of absolutely fresh troops recently despatched to his aid from Holland by Spinola, whereas the Protestants were not only weary from their enforced march, but again on the point of mutiny. Cordova had seven cannon, and there were but two heavy guns with the Protestant army.

On the 28th of August, at break of day, Mansfeld surprised the Spanish camp. Though he attacked repeatedly and with dauntless courage, he was beaten back with fearful loss. Hereupon the Halberstädter with his cavalry fell upon the Spanish rear-guard, and though repulsed four times, he finally succeeded in routing the entire Spanish army; for Cordova, thinking that such reckless courage must surely be inspired by the arrival of unexpected reinforcements, gave the order to retreat, and pursued by the Halberstädter, the flower of the Spanish forces fled, abandoning cannon, ammunition, baggage, and the well-filled treasure-carts. Cordova's army would have been annihilated had not the timely arrival of three thousand fresh Imperial troops, under General Gouchier, caused the Halberstädter to relinquish the pursuit.

It was a glorious victory for the Protestants, a victory won not alone over overwhelming numbers, but won in spite of weariness, discontent, and insubordination. It had been the Halberstädter's fiery courage which had inspired his men with magnificent heroism, and when at the end of the battle the officers gathered round him, their enthusiasm was loudly expressed.

The Halberstädter stood leaning against the pole of his tent, his face was deathly pale, and his brown eyes were wild and brilliant. His buff-leather jerkin was blood-stained, and his steel breastplate dented and tarnished. He had removed his helmet, its weight had left a red weal across his brow, and his short-cropped, brown hair was dank with sweat. With his right hand he clasped the tentpole convulsively, his left hand was hidden in the folds of his sky-blue baldric. He stood silent while the

officers praised his splendid dash and prowess. Offended by his taciturnity, they whispered that the mad Halberstädter had grown madder than ever—a great captain, surely, but a madman, they said. Now into the crowd of officers a short, thick-set man pushed his way, a man whose large head and misshapen shoulders gave him a grotesque appearance, but whose sombre, sneering face banished mockery and evoked a sense of fear in his beholders. The officers fell back, saluting him respectfully.

"Is his Highness of Brunswick here?" he said in the melodious quiet voice which always surprised those who first met with Ernest Mansfeld, the bastard son of a nobleman and a dissolute camp-follower, a woman who had borne the ominous name of Dame Krieg Krieg, a strange appellation enough for the mother of a man destined to earn his life and renown by the profession of war. Mansfeld came to the Halberstädter, and a smile of singular sweetness lit his harsh features—that same unexpected smile which had perhaps explained the fascination of the coarse, ill-favoured camp-follower over many a haughty noble.

"My Lord Duke of Brunswick," Mansfeld said, and stretched out both hands to the silent man, "the honour of this day is yours alone! I can claim no part in the winning of the battle of Fleurus. Give me your hands, my lord, that I may have the honour of a brave man's touch!"

Slowly the Halberstädter unclasped his hold of the tentpole and reached out his right hand to Mansfeld. The hunchback stood with both hands outstretched, and though he gripped the Halberstädter's right hand warmly, in his generous enthusiasm he would have taken Christian's left hand as well, and his face darkened as the Halberstädter stood seemingly unresponsive to his warmth. He was always suspicious of insult, this bastard, who had too often drunk the bitterness of humiliation, and the slightest unintentional coldness tasted as gall to him.

"I came to congratulate your Highness; I see my intent is misconstrued," he said haughtily, and, dropping the Halberstädter's hand, he would have turned away. Christian's apathy vanished.

"I thank you, my comrade and commander!" he cried, and his voice trembled as though the tears had risen in his throat. "Honour from so great a captain is more to me than a king's favour."

Mansfeld's face softened, and once more he held out both his hands impulsively.

"I cannot give you my left hand, sir," said Christian in a low voice; "I am a trifle wounded."

He swayed suddenly, and would have fallen had not Mansfeld supported him. They led him into his tent and gave him wine.

"Gentlemen! I crave your pardon for so womanish a spectacle!" cried the Halberstädter; "I was weary, and I believe near to swooning. I am restored now, but I pray you send for the surgeon; my hand needs binding up."

He lifted his left hand out of the folds of his baldric, and even the war-inured men around him shuddered, for that which had been a hand was now but a lump of blackened and bleeding flesh. Mansfeld, like many a strong man, had all a woman's compassion for physical suffering. With a sure and gentle touch he took that mutilated hand. He bade them bring him water, and he washed away some of the ghastly crust of blood and grime. He knew well enough the excruciating agony which the Halberstädter endured; knew, too, the price which Christian was to pay for the victory of Fleurus. Softly, as a woman speaks to a sick child, he spoke to Christian, and when the question he dreaded came, he answered steadily.

"Will my hand heal in a few weeks, Mansfeld? You, who know such things, tell me, will it be covered with unsightly scars?" As he spoke the Halberstädter's eyes wandered to his helmet, which lay on the rude camp-table, that helmet with the woman's glove and the device: "Tout pour Dieu et pour elle."

"Your hand will not be scarred," Mansfeld answered; and Christian did not see how the cruel, dishonest condottiere paid him the tribute of tears.

"Better death than to be made hideous in a woman's sight," cried the Halberstädter, trying piteously to speak lightly, despite his pain; and again the brave cheerfulness of his tone caused Mansfeld to turn away.

The camp surgeon, a grave personage who had learned his skill in the school of Ambroise Paré, the famed chirurgeon of Henri II., came to the tent. He questioned the Halberstädter quickly.

"When got your Highness this hurt? At the outset of the battle! Hum—hum—how could you go on, your Highness? Felt you no pain? You had no thought for it! There—grip my Lord Mansfeld's arm. I must hurt you." He probed the bleeding flesh with his sharp knife. The Halberstädter set his teeth.

"It is but a little wound, sir," he said faintly. "I doubt not 'twill heal at once if you pour some salve upon it." The surgeon's eyes met Mansfeld's.

"Tell him," the condottiere whispered; "the hero of Fleurus can face anything—even this."

"My Lord Duke," the surgeon said gravely, "this is no little hurt."

"Will it leave my hand unsightly?" Christian asked, and again his glance rested on the woman's glove in his helmet.

"Nay, your Highness, you will have no left hand more," the surgeon answered huskily.

The Halberstädter looked at him, speechless, for a moment, then he rose stiffly and stood quivering, tense, like some hunted animal at bay and threatened by the outrage of man's cruelty.

"Say—that—again," he whispered at last hoarsely. "I did not understand—you said?"

"I said that no human skill could heal your hand; the flesh is fouled, and if I leave your hand upon your arm the corruption will spread," the surgeon answered.

Very slowly the Halberstädter moved across the tent to where his helmet lay upon the rude table, and stood there with his back turned to the surgeon, Mansfeld, and the officers, so that no man saw his face. The surgeon

made a movement as though to go to him, but Mansfeld caught him by the arm.

"Leave him be," he muttered; "he is fighting a more desperate battle than even he hath ever fought."

After a few moments the Halberstädter turned. His face was livid, but his lips were firm.

"Is there no other way, Mansfeld?" he asked quietly. "Is there no pain that I can endure which will save me from this blemish? Can they not pour gunpowder into the wound, even though I suffer the agony of hell, can no one save me from this shame?"

Mansfeld shook his head, and, unabashed by the presence of the officers, he let the tears roll down his cheeks now.

"There is no other way, hero of Fleurus," he said.

"Let it be done at once, then," the Halberstädter said. "I thank you for your courtesy in telling me immediately, sir," he added calmly to the surgeon.

They would have taken him to the Abbey of Fleurus, for the surgeon said that the quiet of a comfortable dwelling-room was necessary for the sufferer. But here the Halberstädter near broke down.

"Do not mew me in a closed room!" he pleaded. "Mansfeld, you understand; tell him how I can bear all things, but not to be put in a sick-room like an ailing woman. I am not ill!" he cried; "a misfortune hath befallen me, but I am right well." He who undaunted could face mortal agony, could not face the degradation of sickness.

"I am right well," he said. "If this thing must be done, let it be done in the fresh air before my tent, and let me have the trumpets and drums to sing me a song of war, so that I may forget to wince beneath Master Baptist's knife."

"Master Surgeon," said Mansfeld gruffly, "you must do your work where and how his Highness bids you."

They set a chair and a table before the Halberstädter's tent, and as the sun of the August day sank in fiery splendour, the hero of Fleurus sat there with Mansfeld

holding that strong right hand with the short powerful thumb and the long pointed fingers, while stretched across the table was the left arm with that other hand——

And the trumpets and drums of the Protestant army blazed forth in a triumph for the glorious victory of Fleurus.

CHAPTER XIX

FAREWELL

THE Countess of Nassau craved audience of her Majesty of Bohemia. The Queen was but newly returned from riding along the sands of Scheveningen and had given orders to be undisturbed, saying she was weary and would rest awhile. She marvelled what should bring Sophie of Nassau at this unwonted hour. The Halberstädter's sister was a frequent visitor at the house on the Lange Voorhout, and the Queen saw her at the few festivities which took place at the Hague since the war had begun, but after the Halberstädter's departure a certain reserve had sprung up between the two ladies.

"Pray her Highness to await me a short span, Alison," the Queen said. "I will dress quickly and come to her." She rose from the couch whereon she had been resting, and donned a flowing white satin skirt and that little pelisse of azure velvet with the white fur, which she had worn when she had seen the Halberstädter on that summer night, which was ever present in her mind, and yet seemed so strangely unreal to her.

"I crave your pardon, cousin, if I have kept you waiting," the Queen said, as she entered the oaken parlour.

"It is I who should pray forgivenness for coming to your Majesty at this hour," Sophie of Nassau said; "but I have news from Germany which you must only learn from my lips."

"You bring ill tidings, Sophie?" the Queen said quickly, and her face grew very white. "Tell me—I can bear all things save the slow telling of disaster which kindness prompts! Is my King dead?"

"The King! Nay, ma cousine," the Countess answered, and there was a note of resentment and scorn in her voice; "the King is right well and safe at Sedan as far as I know, but my brother——"

"Christian! what ails him? Quick—tell me!" the Queen cried, and her voice was shrill and tremulous.

"He is sore wounded, madame. There has been a great victory at Fleurus, which may even turn the tide of misfortune for the Protestants."

"What of Christian—I care no jot for the victory. Sophie, tell me—is your brother dead?" the Queen interrupted almost fiercely.

Slowly, and in a voice choked with tears, Sophie of Nassau told her of the battle of Fleurus, of how the Halberstädter had won the day by his splendid dash and valour, of how the mutinous troopers had forgotten their ill-will in ardent enthusiasm for so dauntless a leader, and at what a price this youth of twenty-three summers had won the victory.

"He is so young to be thus maimed," she finished piteously. "Oh! cousin, it always seems to me that he is still a boy—we think so of our brothers. Forgive me, cousin—I am weak, I know," and she bent her head and wept.

The Queen said no word, she sat there as one struck motionless; she pressed her kerchief hard against her lips, and her eyes, wild and strained, gazed out at the lime-trees beyond the garden, as though she saw some fearful scene. His hand that she had loved so—that white strong hand with the blue veins—his hand which had held her to him on that summer night.—She turned sick with an agony of comprehension, not alone of his physical pain, but because she knew that he would deem himself blemished in her sight.

"Alack! a poor maimed thing now!" she remembered he had once said of a man whose foot bad been shot off in some battle. In her overwrought mind she saw the bleeding stump of his arm—she saw it hacked, and jagged, and fearful.

Suddenly she sprang up. "How far is Fleurus from here?" she demanded. "How many days to ride?"

Sophie of Nassau looked at her in surprise "Fleurus? Five or six days to ride, I should say," she answered wonderingly. "Would you send a messenger to my brother, madame? Ah! cousin, if you would, I think a word from you would be a surer balsam than a thousand essences."

The Queen turned away.

"I would go myself if I were his sister," she said in a low, uncertain voice.

"What use should I be in a rough camp, madame?" asked Sophie.

"Use! use!" the Queen turned on her. "What use is life save to give it to those we love?" All the bitterness of unsanctioned love surged in her heart. His sister would blame her did she know the passion which raged in her; his sister, who gave that good, peaceful affection and would give no more, would blame the woman who yearned to face hardship—even shame—only to be able to give to the man she loved. She knew that the joy of life is giving, knew, too, that she was debarred from giving.

"You will not go?" she said.

"I fear me Christian would scarce welcome me in his camp," Sophie answered with a little smile.

"You are right, perchance," the Queen answered. She realised at that moment how those who harbour turbulent passion, how those whom God has made vehement, are usually proved wrong by the quiet wisdom of those who care less, of those who know, as the world deems it, how to care sensibly. With an effort she calmed herself outwardly.

"Tell me more of what you have heard," she said.

Sophie of Nassau told her that Mansfeld's letter had been brought to her by a trusty messenger from the Protestant camp. She had questioned the man herself, and he had told her many things. Christian had evidently been in a strange mood for many months before the

battle of Fleurus. The man had said that the soldiers believed his Highness seldom slept, for the torch in his tent was never extinguished till the dawn brought another light. The soldiers had sometimes crept near his tent and watched him sitting, moody and fierce, gazing out into the darkness, or sometimes restlessly pacing, examining his swords or burnishing his helmet or his breastplate.

"But this is not all," she said; "I hardly can tell your Majesty—" she hesitated.

"Tell me—I am no little maiden to be spared the knowledge of a man's life," the Queen said. "Besides, I am so—so true a friend to you and Christian that I would fain know all I can of him."

"He sends for women from the villages, madame, and they come for the most part right willingly. Well, they are brought to his tent, and the soldiers hear him speak to them, and then—then he orders them begone, calls for them to be safely guarded out of the camp. They come from his tent laughing, for he gives them gold and trinkets and fair words—but—but," she hesitated again. "But that for which they came—for which he summoned them—that is not. And the soldiers say that the mad Halberstädter was never madder. Alas! I, too, fear that my brother is insane."

"What! do you say so too? Mad because he will not sink to be a wanton brute!" said the Queen vehemently.

"Nay," Sophie answered; "but mad because, having called for wanton lust, he will have none of it."

"Oh! write and tell him that I—Sophie—Sophie—tell him that I honour him—that I trust him—that all my heart goes out to him. Tell him that I know—" She flung herself down in her chair, and covering her face with her hands, wept in an agony of tearing sobs.

Sophie of Nassau came to her, timidly touched her shoulder, sought to draw her to her, but Elizabeth Stuart put her away. Sophie stood there silently. The Queen loved Christian, she had always known it, with that swift insight which is the inborn lore of woman; yet she accounted this desperate grieving to be almost unseemly.

"My brother is not dead, cousin," she whispered at length.

"Worse for him, tell him that I know that—but tell him that I give him no pity," the Queen answered brokenly; but she lifted her head proudly again as she spoke the strange words.

"No pity? Surely, cousin, all the world must pity a youth thus stricken," said Sophie of Nassau.

"Tell Christian that I can never pity where I honour. Oh! you cannot understand! But tell him that I should never dare to pity him," the Queen answered.

"I will write him your strange message, Madame ma cousine," Sophie said coldly, and, after sweeping the Queen a profound curtsey, she withdrew.

. . . . . .

Evil tidings came thick and fast to the Hague. Heidelberg had fallen; Tilly held both castle and town. The treasures garnered there for generations had been sent to Munich, and the books of the famous library, packed in one hundred and eighty-four strong kists, were being despatched to Rome by Maximilian of Bavaria as a gift to the Pope. Holland, too, was in a sorry plight; Bergen op Zoom, it was said, could hold out little longer; even Maurice of Orange dared not attack Spinola's overwhelming numbers; and Holland trembled at the possibility of an Imperial and Spanish occupation. The Dutch cursed the poor spirit of Friedrich of Bohemia; he and his army had been a good decoy, and had diverted at least a portion of the Imperial forces, and now the whole of the enemy's strength was directed against Maurice of Orange. Only one hope remained—Mansfeld and the Halberstädter's army. Would they reach Holland in time to save Bergen op Zoom?

The King wrote announcing his return to the Hague. He expressed his pleasure at hearing the Halberstädter's wound was healing. He wrote that immediately after Christian's hand had been amputated in the camp at Fleurus, a trumpeter from the enemy had come in, bringing a proposal from Cordova that Christian and

Mansfeld should surrender and throw in their lot with the Imperialists; and that the Halberstädter had returned the proud answer: "I have but one arm now, but it is my sword arm, and with that I shall ever fight for my God and my Queen only." The King added: "God knows! I love him as a brother." Elizabeth Stuart smiled a little rueful smile when she read this. Friedrich's brotherly love had not dissuaded him from dismissing the Halberstädter in the midst of a campaign; had not prevented him from turning the man he "loved as a brother" into a condottiere, practically a brigand captain bound to a gang of robbers.

With terror she realised that she would fain have had it that the King should remain at Sedan—away from her. She asked herself if she had indeed sunk so deep into the sands of passion that she had no longer either tenderness or true liking for Friedrich. She schooled herself to be glad at his return—he was unfortunate and unhappy, she must give him a measure of joy whatever it might cost her. She knew that he, too, dreaded the return to indebted penury; he had even written how, before certain monies had been paid to her from England, he had feared a sojourn in the debtor's prison of the Hague. No, she would not fail him, would not for honour's sake and for pity. She had a wealth of pity for Friedrich, pity which she could not even associate with the Halberstädter.

Then when the King returned, her heart went out to him in a glow of generous affection. He was so changed, so worn, so white and hollow-eyed, that she loved him with tenderness, and felt it no disloyalty to Christian to give love to this sad, broken being—to him who was her "man," after all.

Alas! those who live a double life in their hearts die a double death of agony. No one knows how torturing a task loyalty is, when loyalty is duty, and the whole soul is thrilling with another loyalty, which is love. It made it harder for her to be good to Friedrich when she heard that the Halberstädter was actually in Holland; and when the bells of the Hague rang out in triumph for

the relief of Bergen op Zoom, it was all she could do to hide her emotion; for the siege of Bergen op Zoom was raised because Spinola dared not fight the massed armies of Maurice of Orange, Mansfeld—and the Halberstädter. Knowing Christian so near, her whole being was in a ferment of yearning, fear, rapture, doubt.

The King spoke constantly of his wish to see the Halberstädter; he sent messages praying him to visit the Hague; even started a wild plan of re-engaging the services of both Mansfeld and Christian, for evidently King James's embassy in Vienna had again failed, and war alone could decide the Palatinate's destiny. Christian returned a courteous and evasive answer; he could scarce hope to be able to leave his army, and thus he durst not promise to journey to the Hague; as for re-entering Friedrich's service, he was eager to fight in his cause, but he was bound to stipulate for a regular payment of the troops, as his own treasury was now empty. King Friedrich, as usual, had no money, and thus the project was abandoned. The tardy payment of the six hundred thousand gulden promised by the States-General for the services of the Halberstädter and Mansfeld, was causing a spirit of mutiny in the army, for, being in a friendly country, the soldiers were forbidden to plunder. The Dutch, however, were now anxious to be rid of their allies, for despite the orders of their commanders the men-at-arms, having no other means of subsistence, plundered in secret. Finally the States-General, through Maurice of Orange, promised immediate payment on the condition that both the Halberstädter and Mansfeld, with their armies, should forthwith leave the country. Mansfeld now proceeded to carry out a plan which had long lain hidden in his mind. Under the pretext that Count Enno of East Friesland, an allied Protestant Prince, was in treasonable communication with Spinola, he marched to East Friesland. The example of Bethlem Gabor, who, from being a condottiere and adventurer, had risen to be King of Hungary, worked potently in the minds of most of the great captains of

the day; and Mansfeld dreamed of wresting East Friesland from Count Enno, and proclaiming himself prince of that small country.

The Halberstädter with his men retired to his old vantage-ground between Paderborn and Lippe, and entered the service of those Protestant Princes of that neighbourhood, his own brother Friedrich Ulrich of Brunswick and George of Celle, who were arming in case the adherents of the Protestant faith should be attacked by the Emperor. They justified this proceeding by declaring that, though presently at peace with his Majesty, they deemed it expedient to have a powerful defensive army in the field, though they wished it to be clearly understood that their intentions were defensive, and in no way offensive to their liege lord, the Emperor. Sick at heart, the Halberstädter saw himself drawn into a maze of intrigue. He, who was uncompromising by nature, was expected to fall in with the compromises of half-hearted self-seekers, men who talked of the Protestant faith, of their neutrality, of their obedience to the Emperor, and were, all the time, secretly arming in case it might suit their policy to attack his Majesty's forces. Meanwhile Tilly, with a large Imperial army, waited in the neighbourhood, and the Protestant Princes were occupied with prolonged negotiations for the Imperialists' departure.

Celle then became reconciled with the Emperor, and the Halberstädter was commanded to disband his forces and fling himself upon Ferdinand's mercy. Once more he stood alone; those he had served repudiated him. In July 1623 he decided to march back to the Netherlands, but ere he left he formally renounced his administratorship of Halberstadt, in order that the Protestant Princes could continue their negotiations with the Emperor untrammeled by his right as administrator to participate in their treaties. Christian was again forced into the position of a marauder, of an unemployed soldier of fortune at the head of a robber band. He was an outlaw, too, being under the ban of the Empire, and the word had gone forth that Tilly was to destroy him.

Hard on the heels of the Halberstädter's small army followed Tilly with his hosts. The pursuit became desperate — from pass to pass, from ford to ford, the relentless foe pressed him. After a few days' forced march the Halberstädter dared not even pitch his tents at night; it was only possible to snatch an hour's halt for the much-needed repose, and even thus the enemy's foreguard constantly harried his rear-guard. God alone knew how bitter it was to him to fly thus before the foe, but he durst not risk a battle—he was outnumbered by ten to one. Near the township of Stadtlohn, on the borders of the Netherlands, Tilly fell upon him. Desperately Christian and his men fought against the overwhelming odds. With Tilly's numerical superiority the battle's issue was a foregone conclusion, yet each man in the Halberstädter's army knew that in victory lay his only hope of life, for those who fought under the outlaw were outlaws and could expect no mercy. For seven hours the battle raged. The Halberstädter, it was said, fought not like a man but like a devil, yet it was of no avail—the flower of his army was cut down, and the remainder, broken by fatigue, fled in disorder, carrying away Christian himself in the fugitive stream. Young Thurn, who had fought bravely at his side, was sore wounded. He prayed Christian to abandon him, and to endeavour to rally the remnant of his army for a renewed attack, but the Halberstädter knew that Bernard Thurn would share the fate of the Bohemian patriots did he fall into his Apostolic Majesty's hands, and he refused to leave him. Despite the rush of the panic-stricken soldiery, he succeeded in staying beside the wounded man's rude stretcher, and at nightfall the melancholy little cortège arrived at Arnhem. In the town were many fugitives, and the Halberstädter immediately set about reforming his army, but there was scarce a full regiment left. At last the giant power of Austria had indeed crushed Elizabeth Stuart's champion.

The Halberstädter and his remnant of an army took service with the States-General, and again in the autumn

of 1623 Elizabeth heard that the man she loved was in Holland.

The defeat of Stadtlohn was followed by the defeat of King James's diplomacy. Prince Charles and Buckingham returned from their romantic journey to Spain without the Infanta, and bringing bad news of the negotiations for the restitution of the Palatinate. Buckingham had offended both statesmen and courtiers; Charles had made specious promises anent the English Catholics, which no one expected him to fulfil. Now was started a scheme whereby Prince Hal, Elizabeth's eldest son, was to be affianced to an Austrian Archduchess and educated in Vienna. If this was arranged, Philip of Spain undertook to procure the immediate restoration of a portion of the Palatinate to Friedrich, and promised that at the death of Maximilian of Bavaria, Prince Hal should succeed to the Electorate. Obviously the secret scope of this plan was the conversion to Catholicism of Prince Hal by his education in Vienna, and thus the ultimate imposition of a Catholic ruler upon the Palatinate. Friedrich, as in honour bound, refused this proposal, and Elizabeth Stuart expressed herself in vehement terms on the subject. She would liefer die, she said, than see her son a Catholic; to pay such a price, even for home and affluence, would be a base desertion of Friedrich's vow to be the champion of Protestantism. The hope of a peaceful restoration of the Palatinate grew faint after this refusal, although the negotiations in Madrid dragged wearily on for some months.

During that summer the Queen had given birth to her fifth son, Louis. The child was weakly and ailing, and Sophie of Nassau, who had lately been much with the Queen, thought that the restlessness which during the last year had tortured Elizabeth had had an ill effect on the little one. The Countess of Nassau guessed that Elizabeth, despite her outward, smiling calm, was rent by yearning and racked by hope when she knew the Halberstädter to be in Holland—glad and yet heartsore when she knew him gone to the wars again. There was no mention of all this in the ladies' talk, but since the day

when the Countess Sophie had told the Queen of the battle of Fleurus, there had been an unspoken understanding between them, and Sophie had brought the Queen those few laconic messages which the Halberstädter wrote to his sister. She had seen her flush, and her brown eyes glow, when she read the formal message: "I pray your Grace to tell the Queen that I am ever her faithful servant to serve her," or "Je suis comme toujours le serviteur de la Belle Royne," or "Je voudrois sçavoir si sa Majesté veult byen penser maintes fois a son serviteur." Sophie of Nassau, womanlike, wrote more freely to her brother; she told him openly that "la belle" always spoke of him, that never a day passed where she did not inquire if she had tidings of him. But the Halberstädter —the silent one, as the Queen had called him—was characteristically reserved; probably, with the ostrich-like instinct of the man who loves, he deemed that no one guessed his passion.

One October day the Queen rode out to a hawking-party in the woods beyond the Bosch. The King, again feverishly occupied with a new scheme for recovering the Palatinate, was busy with affairs of State, and had not accompanied her Majesty. Elizabeth welcomed any project which gave Friedrich occupation. It was piteous to see him wandering disconsolately beside the Vijver, pacing along the Voorhout dejectedly, or talking with futile pomposity to some equally futile, pompous diplomatic agent, debating the schemes of nations wherein he, Friedrich, had no longer a voice, but wherein he had become a pawn or a pretext behind which matters of real import were negotiated. Thus, when some European complication gave him the opportunity to write despatches endeavouring to annex the interests of the Palatinate to the negotiations of some vaster enterprise, the Queen rejoiced.

It was a still, autumn day; the air smote fresh and cool as a draught of forest water; the sky was grave, but friendly and suave. The beech-trees in the Bosch were already stripped of that glory of colour which, but a few

weeks since, had clothed them so regally. Now they stood bereft and gaunt, their branches like mighty snakes smooth and satin-skinned, and at their roots a carpet of russet leaves exhaled the fragrancy of autumn. The Queen rode her favourite chestnut mare, a being as haughty and sensitive as herself, eager and nervous yet perfectly understanding the light, strong hand which held the reins. All her Majesty's ladies were of the party: my Lady of Solms, Lady Phyllis Devereux, Mistresses Alison Hay, Stanley, and Clovelly; and there was, too, a new visitor at her Majesty's Court, Mademoiselle de la Trémouille, daughter of the old Electress Juliane's sister, the Duchesse de la Trémouille, and thus cousin to King Friedrich. This Charlotte de la Trémouille was a proud and spirited damsel, truly after the Queen's own heart, with something a trifle like a gallant in her bearing. My young Lord Strange, son of the Earl of Derby, sojourning at the Hague to offer his homage to her Majesty, was there, and his eyes seldom left Mademoiselle Charlotte. The Queen smiled to herself as she saw this dawning love. Young Strange was something like Christel she thought, and she sighed remembering how Christel still languished in prison at Vienna. Albeit Elizabeth Stuart was bravely gay, sad thoughts often assailed her. Life and Death had both conspired to rob her of familiar friends. Lady Harrington had died in England some few months since; Schomberg had fallen at the battle of the White Mountain; Mistress Anne Dudley was dead; Christel was in prison; and the Halberstädter—alas! Life divided her from him as relentlessly as Death itself. A gay voice broke in on her sorrowful pondering.

"Madame, we shall have wedding bells here, for sure! Look at Strange's face, and our cousin Charlotte is right gentle to him!" It was Magnus of Wirtemberg who spoke. He had escaped from "the appalling worthiness," as he said, of Stuttgart's Court, and had come for a short visit to Holland, for although he had momentarily laid down his arms, this "merry Andrew's" friendship for the exiled monarchs was unwavering.

Magnus and the Queen fell a-talking of the days at Prague, and, despite the sadness of those memories, Elizabeth could not forbear laughter when Magnus recalled the matrons with their loaves, or mimicked Master Scultetus.

They rode on, laughing and talking, till they reached the place appointed for the hawking, and then all other thoughts were banished by the amusement of the sport.

The autumn evening was drawing in as they started homewards. Once more Duke Magnus rode beside the Queen, the rest of the party followed at some distance. Suddenly they heard the sound of galloping in one of the grass rides beside them, and a horseman dashed up to the Queen—a man in a green riding jerkin, and across his breast a sky-blue baldric in whose folds his left hand was hidden. His felt hat was drawn deep over his brows. The Queen's horse, startled by the rider's approach, broke into a gallop. At first Magnus spurred beside her, then, with an exclamation of surprise and a hurried lifting of his wide felt hat, he wheeled round and rode back towards the hawking party.

There was something strangely dreamlike to Elizabeth Stuart in this unexpected interruption of the familiar monotony of commonplace life. In the man with the felt hat drawn over his brow, she had immediately recognised the Halberstädter, and although she had believed him to be far away on the German frontier, his constant presence in her thoughts made his unexpected advent seem but the logical and natural continuance of her mental life.

For some time they galloped on in silence. The silvery beech-trunks seemed to rush past them. At length the Queen checked the horse.

"Christian, for God's sake, speak to me!" she cried. "I can bear it no longer. Belovèd—belovèd! speak to me!"

He drew rein beside her. He was white to the lips, and his brown eyes searched her face hungrily as though he sought to read her soul there, but he spoke no word.

"Speak to me, Christian," she repeated tremulously. "I cannot bear to see you so. Ah! I love you, love of mine—speak to me!"

"I am as one struck dumb," he answered hoarsely.

"Then I must speak for us both," she said, "silent one—my silent one!" There lay such a world of tenderness in her voice as she called him by this name, which she had so often used in jest in the old days, that a half-sob rose in his throat.

"I am a fool who cannot speak when feeling is so great," he muttered.

"It was always thus," she answered, with a little wavering smile. "Oh, Christian! the days have been so long without you!—why have you not come to me before? Alas! you make me all unwomanly, for I must woo you as you should woo me! But Christian"—how she lingered over that well-loved name—"Christian, our wooing days are over—or have never been. I only know that I love you."

"Do you dream that I have forgotten?" he broke in. "Elizabeth, I have known no thought save the love of you! Would that I could tell you!"

"I know already," she said, and through her mind there flashed a picture of what Sophie of Nassau had told her of the camp and the Halberstädter's tent beneath the night sky—of the peasant women brought thither—of their mockery when they were dismissed—of how men said the Halberstädter was mad because he would no longer sink to debauchery; would not, because he loved her as "no man had ever loved before," as he had once said.

"Christian, I know right well that you have had no thought save of me," she said. "Oh! that I could make it clear to you how you, and only you have reigned in my heart day—and night," she finished bravely, though the blood rushed hotly to her cheek at this avowal.

Their eyes met and drew their souls together with the power of passion.

"You will not leave me now," she whispered. "You will come to the Hague——"

"No," he said sternly, "I can never come to you until I have won back a kingdom for you."

"What do I care for a kingdom!" she cried vehemently. "I can never let you go from me again—never—never!"

He shook his head, and then as though some new thought stung him to madness, he spoke quickly, almost roughly.

"Perchance because I am so maimed a creature, so unsightly now, you deem I can take the place of some tame house friend—you offer me pity—and the King's kindness," he added bitterly.

"You are unjust, Christian," she said proudly, "unjust and ungenerous to me." She glanced over her shoulder; she dreaded lest the other riders should interrupt this meeting which she thought was, perhaps, her last with the man she loved. She saw that Magnus was leading the cavalcade down another road, and she blessed him for it in her heart, as though he had given her a great gift.

"Christian!" she said, and her voice had grown infinitely tender again; "do not waste the precious moments we have together by such vain things. I love you, and all my soul is athirst to hear you say you love me! Ah! I know it—but I must hear it again—we women must———"

"I love you!" he broke in; "through life and in death I must always love you, Elizabeth."

"When will you come back to me?" she asked piteously.

"If, and when God wills it," he made answer solemnly.

For an instant silence fell between them. Far away a rook cawed hoarsely, and nearer in the wood there came the sharp yap of one of the hunter's dogs.

"The hawking party will rejoin us in a moment," she said hurriedly. "There is one thing I would ask you, Christian. Give me something you have worn—a ring—a chain—it matters not; but I would fain have something to keep by me always, till we meet again. It would be my talisman."

He glanced down at his ringless right hand which held the reins. He was not a man to wear trinkets.

"Ah!" he said, remembering suddenly, "I have the chain with the little jewel which my mother gave me. You will see why I wear it." With a dexterous movement of his one hand he twisted the reins around the pommel of his saddle, and unfastened the breast-buttons of his jerkin. Somehow his quick dexterity with his one hand brought home anew to her the tragedy of a man so strong and adroit being maimed as he was, and the tears rose in her eyes.

He was fumbling with the clasp of the chain around his neck now, and she saw how instinctively he made a movement with his left arm—that arm whereon there was no hand. She bent forward in her saddle and would have aided him, but he shot her an almost hostile look, and violently wrenched the chain in twain. She held out her hand, and he laid in it a slight golden chain and a little crystal jewel whereon was engraven the name "Elizabeth."

"You see why I have worn it," he said.

She nodded. A wave of sadness drowned all speech for her, yet she yearned to cry out that all the world might go hang—Friedrich—her children — duty—honour—. She loved him, and nothing else on earth counted.

Close among the trees she heard the sound of laughing voices and the tramp of horses.

"They are coming," she said, "Christian! Christian!"

"Give me your hand—let me feel your touch once more." There was no pleading in his tone, rather a command.

She drew off her leather gauntlet and reached him her warm, strong white hand.

He bent over and took it in his right hand—she was on his left side, and once more piteously she realised his grievous hurt—but all thought vanished as his touch came on her.

"Christian!" she murmured in a weak, shuddering voice, "Christian, my belovèd——"

He crushed her palm to his lips—she saw how he closed his eyes while he drew in the fragrance of her skin, and

then the throb of her own passion surged in her and shut out consciousness for an instant.

"Farewell, Queen of all my life!" he said. He urged his horse to a gallop, and dashed down the grass ride.

Elizabeth Stuart watched him go, and it seemed to her that the soft autumn had changed to cold darkness, as though the world's light had died suddenly for her.

"We have found a good place for flying the young hawks, madame," came a merry voice close to her.

"I thank you for much, Magnus," she said simply.

CHAPTER XX

"IF LOVE BE DEAD, WHY DOST THOU RISE, O SUN?"

"I think of thee, lost love, and testify
The present pain cheap price for the dear past;
Though Fate through life all comfort should deny,
And after death my loneliness still last,
'Tis better to have held thee once so fast
Than die without thy love, as others die."

—Philip Bourke Marston.

THE Queen had passed through an o'erdarkened spell since that day when she had ridden with Christian in the autumn woods. Her baby son, Louis, had died; pestilence had raged in Holland; money was more than ever scarce; and the King's creditors at the Hague, knowing how faint had grown the hope of the Palatinate's restitution, became anxious and pressed for payment.

"It seems as though God's bounty is bestowed upon us only in childbirth," the Queen had said half-bitterly, half-humorously, when her sixth son, Edward, was born in the autumn of 1624.

The exiles' political horizon was blacker than ever. The Palatinate, though still overrun by Imperial troops, was now officially a portion of Maximilian of Bavaria's domain, and he was universally recognised as Elector in Friedrich's stead.

Towards the end of 1624 the gloom was lightened, and once more the exiles' hopes revived. The failure of the Spanish match induced King James to sanction a declaration of war against Spain, with the avowed intention of delivering the Palatinate from the Imperial allies, and both Mansfeld and the Halberstädter were engaged by

England for the enterprise. Mansfeld repaired to the Court of France to solicit assistance in the forthcoming campaign, and the Halberstädter journeyed to England. It was pleasant to Elizabeth Stuart to know him to be a visitor in the home of her childhood, and she rejoiced when she heard of the fulfilment of her request to King James that he should be a Knight of the Garter. She told herself that all this was of happy augury. She was assured that her sojourn at the Hague would soon be ended; she would return to Heidelberg, and the good days of peace and plenty would come again. Often she had remembered the autumn evening when she had bidden farewell to her orchard at Heidelberg, and had seen that uncanny procession of Neckar newts; with an eerie feeling she had recalled the gardener's words: "They say the nasty efts march to a funeral, or to bid farewell to one who will never return to this country." It had seemed to her that she should indeed never see Heidelberg again, but now she smiled at her own despondency. England was at last in arms in the Palatine cause, Denmark had joined the enterprise, and the Halberstädter was to fight for her.

A matrimonial scheme was a-foot for Prince Charles with Princess Henriette Marie, sister to Louis XIII. of France, and England had concluded an alliance with Holland, wherein one of the chief clauses was a definite promise of financial and military aid in the forthcoming campaign. England, France, Denmark, and Holland would surely prove too powerful a combination for Austria and Spain.

In February, 1625, Mansfeld and the Halberstädter marched to the assistance of the Dutch, but before they reached the scene of action the town of Breda had fallen before the victorious Spinola. The Protestant army now moved southwards towards the Palatinate, but found their progress blocked by Anholt with the Bavarian army.

In the March of that year King James died. Though Elizabeth Stuart mourned him dutifully, still it was with renewed confidence that she knew her brother to be on

the throne of England; for Charles had ever professed the most faithful affection for her, and she knew how he had always opposed his father's dilatory, half-hearted foreign policy. But her perfunctory mourning was turned to real sorrow a few weeks later by the death of Maurice of Orange. He had been a true friend to her from the moment when she had landed in Holland, journeying to Heidelberg, and, in the day of her dire need, when she had come to Holland a homeless exile, this uncouth warrior had shown her a chivalrous devotion.

On his deathbed Maurice had advised his brother and heir, Frederik Hendrik, to follow the dictates of his heart, and to make Amalia Solms his wife; and thus hardly were the magnificent obsequies which the States-General gave to their gallant Stadthouder concluded, when the wedding bells for the new Stadthouder rang out. The Queen had always predicted this marriage, and she silenced my Lady Phyllis when she mocked the affianced Amalia's self-conscious superiority of manner.

"Phyllis, Phyllis, I would I could see you all thus safely married," the Queen said gravely.

"But not to a Prince Frederik Hendrik!" Phyllis retorted.

"Dulness is not always the worst fault in a husband," replied Elizabeth Stuart. "Frederik Hendrik is very solid in mind."

"Oh! and in body too!" cried Phyllis gaily. "They will be like a pair of heavy Flemish horses, madame!"

"Good lack, girl! they will protect virtue even in its most unalluring form; romance and wild ambition will hide from them"—she smiled and sighed at once—"and that is better for a country's ruler than soaring plans—and failure."

But the Princess Amalia was to deal a blow to the Queen's pride which caused her Majesty bitter anger. Hardly were Prince and Princess Frederik Hendrik settled at the Binnenhof, when Amalia requested an audience of the Queen. This formal demand from one who had lived so long on the most informal footing with her, surprised

the Queen, yet she made ready to receive her Highness of Orange, as desired, in official audience.

She assembled her ladies and the gentlemen of her Court around her, and awaited the new Princess's advent.

"Phyllis, if you laugh I vow I shall dismiss you from my service," the Queen whispered as the parlour door was thrown open. She rose and swept a profound curtsey to Amalia, who responded by a deep obeisance.

"It is a pleasure to me to receive your Highness," the Queen said gravely. Amalia glanced at her suspiciously; she knew Elizabeth Stuart too well to believe her gravity to be genuine.

"I thank your Majesty," she answered. "Ah! good-day, Lady Phyllis; good-day, ladies."

"Good-day, your Highness," returned Phyllis haughtily.

"As I have a matter of importance to discuss, madame, I would crave your Majesty to speak with me in private," continued Amalia, growing very red. The Queen raised her eyebrows, but turning to her ladies, prayed them to leave her alone with her Highness of Orange.

"Oh! for the dear God's sake, Cousin Amalia!" the Queen broke forth as soon as they were alone, "must we mince and bow as though we were strangers?" She held out her hand frankly: "Where formality dwells no friendship is possible," she said.

Amalia made no answer; she took the Queen's hand shyly and stiffly, and looked embarrassed.

"What is this matter which you would discuss?" the Queen asked, after a moment's pause.

"Your Majesty, it is irksome to me," began Amalia. She paused again, for the Queen's foot tapped the floor impatiently. "Very irksome," she continued.

"Well, what is it, then? Have you discovered that your marriage is not legal? Or do you propose to declare war between Holland and—Bohemia?" Elizabeth asked mockingly. Amalia's long histories before she got to the real business of the day, had always irritated the Queen. Her Majesty had all the impatience of a quick and direct nature; she was wont to say with an echo of her Scotch

nurse's phraseology: "I can't abide the fecklessness of these German women. They clack and whimper and never get to the day's work until they have frowsed themselves into unsightly dullards!"

She sat down, and, leaning her arm on the table, rested her chin in her hand. Amalia looked around, and seated herself in the King's chair, which stood at the farther end of the table. She was Princess of Orange now, she remembered, and did not need the Queen's permission to be seated in her presence.

"Well, cousin?" said the Queen, after another pause.

"It is irksome to me, madame," said Amalia again.

"So your Highness has had the goodness to inform me —twice, I think," the Queen said icily.

"It is about the carriages, madame—the Stadthouder's equipages," Amalia said; "your Majesty has some of them now."

"Yes?" said the Queen wonderingly. She had used the Stadthouder's coaches for over four years now, and the habit of four years is as powerful as the habit of a lifetime. "Yes, I have some of the carriages; what of that?" she asked.

"Prince Maurice, my husband's sainted brother, was unmarried," continued Amelia Solms.

"Amalia!" cried the Queen, laughing, "have mercy on me and tell me something I do not know!"

"The present Stadthouder is married, and his wife has need of carriages, madame; that is all," Amalia said shrilly, and her fair-skinned face grew pink-mottled with anger.

"Of course, of course," the Queen said soothingly; "but what has that to do with me?"

"Madame, we live in troublous times; all the gold is needed for the army's maintenance; more carriages for the Stadthouder's use cannot be purchased, and I fear the coaches your Majesty has now, can no longer be at your disposal—I regret it," Amalia finished awkwardly.

The Queen rose. The colour had left her face, and her eyes had grown hard.

"Is this a message from your husband, the Stadthouder?" she queried coldly.

"I spoke with the Prince of Orange on the subject. Of course I could settle nothing without my dear husband's consent, madame. He is very generous and would have waived the question for a time, but we have agreed that such arrangements must end before their long continuance has caused them to become precedents," Amalia said, grown quite courageous now that she had dealt her blow.

The Queen knew full well what was implied by this talk of precedents. Amalia meant that the loan of the carriages must be withdrawn, lest the exiles should consider this charity to have become their right.

"I understand perfectly, your Highness," said the Queen haughtily; "you need express no regret," she added, as Amalia came towards her, murmuring: "I am indeed grieved."

"You need really not give the matter further consideration, your Highness. I shall not require the state carriages again."

Amalia scanned the Queen's face in quick curiosity. "Perchance your Majesty will soon be leaving the Hague?" she said.

"At present I am the guest of the States-General," the Queen answered meaningly, "and I do not know how much longer I shall enjoy their hospitality. But, in any case, I shall not require the Stadthouder's coaches again. I pray you greet my cousin of Orange, and tell him I understand the situation perfectly."

The shaft went home. Amalia knew that the Queen meant she was aware that the unfriendly action had not been prompted by the Stadthouder; that it was Amalia's idea, and that Frederik Hendrik had given it his sanction against his own good-natured inclination, guided by the demure determination of his outwardly submissive wife.

"He will rejoice that your Majesty shows so ready an acquiescence," she began, but found herself silenced by

the haughty bow of dismissal wherewith the Queen terminated the audience.

There was bitter anger in the "Bohemian Court" at the Princess Amalia's action. My Lady Phyllis and the other ladies vowed they would not salute the Princess of Orange when next they met her, and King Friedrich would have laid the matter of the carriages before the States-General, while Lord Strange and Magnus of Wirtemberg were eager to wait upon the Stadthouder to remonstrate with him.

"I pray you leave it be," said Elizabeth Stuart; "the best pride is silence. We will buy carosses somehow; besides, I can go on foot."

"A Queen—a Princess Palatine cannot walk among the rabble!" cried Friedrich despairingly. Elizabeth Stuart smiled.

"Dear my lord," she said, "I would have you remember that there is naught I cannot do. Elizabeth Stuart is Elizabeth Stuart whether she walks in the mud or rides in a gilded coach. Such things can never make me less, nor more!"

The King bowed his head; before her indomitable pride of race and being he always felt at once humbled and uplifted. In a way he felt her pride to be a protection to him.

A few carosses were purchased and paid for—somehow, though each day the state of the King's finances grew more deplorable and the creditors' importunities more irksome. Yet hope was high in the Queen's heart, for Mansfeld, the Halberstädter, and the King of Denmark were actually in arms in Germany, and it could not be long before their victory would break the power of Austria and Spain. At present, however, though the belligerents confronted each other, and the whole of Germany was armed to the teeth, and there had been a hundred skirmishes, no battle had taken place. Yet it was thought that all was going well.

The marriage of King Charles of England with Henriette Marie being now accomplished, France was bound to keep

faith with the enemies of Austria; and the German Protestant Princes, though they gave it grudgingly, had been unable to refuse their support to an army enrolled in the name of Protestantism by the great anti-Catholic powers. Only two Protestant potentates had refused their support: John George of Saxony who sided with the Emperor, and the Elector of Brandenburg, Friedrich's brother-in-law, hung back as usual, alleging a dozen reasons for remaining neutral. Among the numerous pretexts which he put forward, the only one which had a semblance of kindly consideration for his unfortunate kinsman, was the plea that, as Friedrich's mother, Louise Juliane, and his two children, Elizabeth and Karlutz, were still harboured in Berlin, it was better to remain neutral and thus to insure the safety of their refuge.

The Protestant army was confronted in Germany by a new antagonist, the Count of Wallenstein, a Bohemian Catholic, who had been called upon by the Emperor Ferdinand to enlist a separate army to assist Spinola, Cordova, Tilly, and the Bavarian Anholt, in exterminating the "pestilent heretical rebels." The Emperor issued a proclamation commanding that the utmost rigour should be shown to Mansfeld and the Halberstädter; it was lawful to do them injury, it was unlawful to give them food or shelter. The Protestant Princes, alarmed at this stern decree, wavered momentarily in their loyalty to the Reformed Cause, but only two actually submitted to the Emperor; these were the Dukes George and Christian of Celle, Guelphs and distant kinsmen of the Halberstädter. There was a family intrigue underlying their policy. Friedrich Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel being childless, his brother the Halberstädter was his heir, and the Celles hoped by espousing the Emperor's cause to win favour and eventually procure the outlawed Halberstädter's exclusion from the succession and the sequestration of his lands, which would then by hereditary right fall to them.

For months the war dragged on; there were skirmishes and intrigues, proposed treaties between the Emperor and

his adversaries, quarrels between the Protestant commanders, but still no decisive action was fought. In England the Parliament refused to grant supplies for the war unless Buckingham was dismissed from office; and King Charles, though he loved his sister and honestly desired to furnish the army with funds, loved Buckingham and his own prerogatives better, now angrily dissolved the Parliament. The supplies were thus not voted, and nothing could be sent to Germany for the maintenance of the army. The King of Denmark believed this omission to proceed from bad faith on Charles's part, and a general feeling of hopelessness spread among the allied Protestants.

Added to this the Halberstädter, weary and disheartened at length, was forced to abandon the army for a time, as his presence at Wolfenbüttel was indispensable if he would save his inheritance. Urgently his mother wrote that there was a plot in Vienna to depose Friedrich Ulrich, to sequestrate his lands, and to hand them over to the intriguing kinsmen.

With rapture Elizabeth of Brunswick welcomed the Halberstädter back to Wolfenbüttel. He had ever been wild and fierce, and had brought her anxiety and sorrow, but she had always loved him a thousand times more than the tame, poor-spirited Friedrich Ulrich. He came to her now, broken in health, maimed in body, an outlaw with a price set upon his head, a man with sorrow writ large upon his face, when inattention lifted the mask of pride and courage which he wore. With a touching pretence of hopefulness she wrote to Sophie of Nassau that she doubted not a few weeks' rest and care would restore Christian to health; it was only the fever which wore him thus, the low fever which had never left him since the battle of Fleurus.

Sophie of Nassau hurried to the Queen with these ill tidings. Elizabeth Stuart was already discouraged by the tardy progress of the war in Germany, and by her own ever-increasing pecuniary anxieties, but she would not let herself believe that this sadness could be added to her misfortune. All things—only not this—not this. He

would recover, he was so strong and brave, he could not die, save on the battlefield.

Friedrich was absent from the Hague; the building of a hunting castle near Rhenen occupied his Majesty greatly at this time. The munificent States-General had granted him a piece of land and some funds wherewith to build a house. Thus Elizabeth Stuart was at least spared the added torture of concealing her anxiety, and her sorrowful presentiments.

"All things save this," she had said. How many a woman has prayed this same piteous prayer to God, before the blow falls which makes life bitter for ever!

. . . . . .

The Spring had come; the lime-trees on the Lange Voorhout were radiant with their coronal of young leaves. Already in the garden before the Queen's house the tulips were overblown and many petals lay upon the earth. It was May, and the birds warbled of the coming of summer. Elizabeth Stuart sat writing to King Charles of England. Her long delicate fingers drove the quill swiftly across the pages; she seldom paused to seek a word, for her thoughts ever travelled faster than that flying pen. Lady Harrington had been wont to say: "Her Highness sweeps over the paper as though her pen were a besom," and truth to tell, the Queen's caligraphy, with its broad dashes and sweeping strokes, ever bore traces of her impetuous haste.

She finished her letter to King Charles, signed that cramped monogram which signified E. B., Elizabeth Bohemia, and with deft fingers she began the folding of her missive. She struck a spark from a steel tinder-box, lighted a little taper, bound her letter round with a strand of yellow silken thread, and affixed the seal. Her thoughts had wandered to Wolfenbüttel again, and her usually dexterous fingers, unguided by her mind, proved disobedient servants of so careless a ruler—they spoiled the seal.

At this moment a hurried footfall came in the corridor, and Sophie of Nassau entered the parlour unannounced. The Queen was busy with the resealing of her letter.

"Is that you, Phyllis?" she said absently, without raising her eyes from her occupation.

"Ma cousine, it is I," said a tremulous voice behind her.

"Sophie!" cried the Queen, springing up, "what tidings—" but the words died on her lips as she saw Sophie's face, and the letter fluttered unheeded from her fingers. There was no need for Sophie of Nassau to speak, Elizabeth Stuart had read her tidings in her face. She stretched out both hands to Sophie.

"When?" the Queen asked in a low voice.

"Six days since," she answered, and, burying her face in her hands, she wept quietly.

The Queen stood silent and immovable, only her fingers clutched convulsively at her throat. For an instant all thought was banished by an awful choking, as though a cord drawn around her throat throttled her. Through the open casement there came the sweetness of the soft Spring air, and the sound of Prince Hal's blithe young voice in the garden as he played with his dog. Then the boy called gaily through the window:

"Mother, mother! Come and see how my dog can jump. Brady dog! jump!"

Sophie of Nassau was sobbing.

"Go, Hal; I cannot come now," the Queen said gently.

"Oh, do come and see Brady, mother," the boy called.

"No, not now—I have another thing to do," she answered. What had she to do after all? This was her life, this commonplace living with its manifold difficulties and cares—her children and their pastimes. . . .

She pressed both hands against her eyes. There was some mistake—it was an evil dream—she would wake soon. Some day Christian would come back to her and all would be well. She touched the little jewel he had given her; it was always hidden on her breast.

"Sophie, what have you heard? There is some mistake," she said almost stupidly.

For answer Sophie of Nassau held a letter out to her. She took it, unfolded the sheet, and read. The whole miserable story was written there, how he had come back

to Wolfenbüttel, how each day he had grown weaker, how the physicians had not been able to explain his malady, how he had suffered from a burning thirst. That his mind had wandered, and that in his delirium he had been constantly commanding an army, but that at the last—the Queen's vision grew dim, and the strangled feeling came again, but she forced herself to read on—at the last his mind had been clear. He had caused himself to be dressed in his buff jerkin and cuirass, with the sky-blue baldric across his breast, and had bidden them support him to the window, where he had stood, swaying weakly, but looking out—out as though he saw something which no one else could see. How he had spoken no word, but silently had gazed out at the Spring, and then how suddenly his knees had bent beneath him and he had fallen forward, but his mother had caught him and had pillowed his head upon her heart. Then he had spoken one word—one only—and it had comforted the mother exceedingly, for with his last breath he had called her "Belovèd."

With a great cry that sounded almost as a cry of triumph, Elizabeth Stuart let the letter fall to the ground Over and over again she repeated Christian's death-word: "Belovèd! Belovèd!"

Sophie of Nassau rose and came to her. The barrier of reticence was broken down between them.

"Elizabeth," Sophie said gently, "let my mother in her sorrow believe that he indeed spoke to her—let her have this one solace."

"Did you think that I would ever tell her? Sophie, it is enough for me to know. Ah, God!" the Queen broke out, "ah, God! if I could but have given him more."

"You have no remorse, at least. You never smirched your love," said Sophie, wishful to soothe her.

"I would I had remorse, 'twere better than regret!" the Queen cried passionately.

Sophie of Nassau drew back a little. She was gentle and pure and weak, and she feared the Queen, as she had often feared the Halberstädter. She had always

deemed them to be curiously akin, beings isolated by their own force and vehemence, resembling each other, though one had been so silent and the other was ever so spontaneously expressive in words; yet it was as though each had been the completion of the other's being. Dimly she had always known them to be of the same race—the same world, and thus it had seemed to her inevitable that they should love. Nevertheless the Queen's impetuous frankness appalled her even now.

"Remorse is the avenger of sin," she whispered, with that meek acceptance of axioms which is the refuge of such natures as hers.

"Sin? Remorse? They are all names," the Queen answered wildly. "Sophie, leave me now— To-morrow I will seek to console you in your sisterly grief—but now——"

"God help you," said Sophie of Nassau, and, with a generosity rare enough in grief, she added: "Your sorrow is a thousand times more than mine, but for your comfort I bid you remember his last word."

She left the Queen, and after a moment Elizabeth Stuart followed her out of the parlour and betook herself to her own chamber. And there, where for the first and last time she had known the rapture of Christian's kiss, her pent-up agony now broke forth and she wept. Yet, with the strange working of a woman's soul, it was not on Christian of Brunswick, her dead love, that she called; through her sobs came the broken words:

"Anne, sweet Anne Dudley, would you were here to hold me in your arms! Anne, you would have understood and helped me. I loved him—loved him as I never knew it was possible to love. Anne, I need your friendship in this dark hour, I am so alone—so friendless—" Thus Elizabeth Stuart wept, conquered by the eternal loneliness of grief.

CHAPTER XXI

TIDINGS OF DESPAIR

"C'est trop pleuré,
C'est trop suivy tristesse."
—JEAN DE LA TAILLE.

ELIZABETH STUART'S life went on outwardly unchanged. The same struggles with penury, the same ever-defeated intrigues for the restitution of the Palatinate, the same round of duties and pleasures. No matter that the mainspring of her life was broken, she must go on—Queen, wife, and mother—there could be no breaking down for her. Uncomplainingly, proudly, nobly, she went through the years; bore children for Friedrich, took part in his hopes and fears, consoled him for life's cruelty. Even death could not change duty, even despair could not banish courage. The painters only chronicled that she had passed her calvary, but on their canvasses they recorded, too, something of the grandeur of her bravery, which was cheerfulness in spite of sorrow. The face which Mierevelt loved to paint was no longer the same, though laughter—that shield behind which grief so often hides—concealed her sorrow from those around her. How strange it is that those who are bound closest by the bond of daily life, really see little of a man or woman's true aspect, miss the tragedy, overlook the rapture, are blind to the grandeur which is yet written on the well-known faces. The vision's focus is wrong, perhaps, and those who stand afar see more clearly. Yet if there is pain and loneliness herein there is a merciful ordering also, for the human soul shrinks before too sharp a scrutiny. But with the inconsistency which is eternally human, how we cry out for comprehen-

ELIZABETH OF BOHEMIA.

From a painting by Honthorst in the National Portrait Gallery

sion, how we thirst for nearness! Impatient of that loneliness, which perhaps was given by God as a protection, we for ever seek understanding, forgetting that only once in a lifetime can it be other than a corroding chain, forgetting that it is only bearable when it comes as a flash of intuitive sympathy, that the soul cannot bear scrutiny, God having made each soul to be alone.

Nowadays, on Elizabeth Stuart's face there were written three things: the cheerfulness of courage, the patience which life teaches to the impatient, the sadness of an undying memory. She was never the same after the Halberstädter's death, and she deemed she had drained the chalice of sorrow. She knew not that in the dregs there remained the poison-drops of sordid anxiety, of the bitterness of humiliation, of the shame caused by those she loved.

The monotonous life at the Hague went on. The campaign in Germany had languished for lack of funds. After the battle of Lutter, the only actual combat of that whole campaign, and where the King of Denmark was sorely beaten by Tilly, a truce had been concluded between the Protestant leaders and the Emperor. Magnus of Wirtemburg, poor "merry Andrew," had fallen at Lutter, and a few months after Ernest Mansfeld had died of a strange lingering malady, so similar to that which had killed the Halberstädter, that the talk was renewed of how both the Protestant champions had died of poison.

With this fading of their hopes the exiles' daily life in the Hague became increasingly difficult. The creditors clamoured for payment, and the remittances from England grew less frequent. The sordidness of debt and anxiety pressed on Elizabeth Stuart. The house at Rhenen had risen stately and commodious, but the funds voted by the States-General were sunk beneath the weight of masonry. Many of the Queen's jewels vanished from her casket. The ruby buttons over which King James had made such a pother with sweet Mistress Anne and Schomberg in the old days at Heidelberg—the ruby buttons disappeared. Then went the pearl ring and chain which had once been among the Danish crown jewels, and which Anne of

Denmark had bequeathed to her daughter "Goody Palsgrave." In fact, her Majesty's trinkets were much diminished in number. She said she heard it was the newest mode "not to bedizen oneself with gauds," but the reason of her Majesty's lack of adornment would have been clear enough if the kists of certain Jewish usurers in Amsterdam could have been examined. It seemed that, after all, and in spite of King Friedrich's strictures, a Princess Palatine could pawn her jewels.

The States-General had given the Queen's children a mansion at Leyden, the house on the Lange Voorhout affording restricted accommodation. Only Prince Hal was constantly at his mother's side, for she loved her first-born with a tenderness which she did not lavish on her other children. She was wont to say that she could do all her maternal duty, attend to the necessities both of her children's minds and of their bodies, but that no one could commandeer love, not even a child from a mother. "Love comes as it listeth," she would say, sighing as she spoke the words. Then she would add, with one of her whimsical smiles: "No one can love a dozen children equally, and methinks God means to deal in dozens with us!"

Her eldest daughter Elizabeth, and her second son Karl Ludwig—Karlutz, as the King had sub-named him—had now left Louise Juliane's care in Berlin, and sojourned at Leyden with the other children. Such prim little Calvinists were these two mites, as Elizabeth Stuart declared. She was half-annoyed and half-diverted by their demure ways. She loved to poke fun at Karlutz, and to see the self-righteous little fellow's consciously superior air. As for the Princess Elizabeth, she had a veritable passion for study, and was the joy and pride of her tutors. But the Queen recalled King James's sayings condemning "over-learned lassies," and whispered to my Lady Phyllis: "Monsieur Sully said my father was the wisest fool in Christendom, but I vow his Majesty was really wise in many things. Strange that I should own it so late in the day! Yet on the subject of over-learned

damsels I am heartily with him. My daughter Elizabeth may learn a whole library, but she'll ever be a wearisome woman."

One pleasure had come to Elizabeth Stuart during the last years, and that was the marriage of Mademoiselle de la Trémouille with Lord Strange. The Queen had been "godmother to a happy love," as she put it, and when letters out of England came, telling her that Charlotte de la Trémouille and her husband were peaceful and content at their fine country home, Lathom House, the haunting feeling that she brought misfortune to her friends left the Queen for awhile.

Prince Hal was her chief occupation nowadays. He had grown into a tall lad, graceful and slender, with a delicate wild-rose complexion like his mother's. His brown eyes, too, were like hers, though they still retained the wide, appealing gaze of a child, and that sparkle and lustre which life so soon extinguishes. He was not "over-learned," albeit he studied swiftly and with interest, but he loved to ride, to hawk, to run, to laugh. He was truly after Elizabeth's own heart, and she thought him the very picture of her beloved brother, that other Prince Hal whom she had loved so deeply. Rupert, too, promised to be of "the same kidney as Hal and me," as she expressed it, but the others——

"Ah, well! they are little Calvinists—so good—so fearsome good, that I could weep for sheer weariness!" she would say to my Lady Phyllis. The people of the Hague, even her Majesty's creditors, smiled when they saw the Queen and her son riding through the town to the hunting beyond the Bosch. They were strikingly alike, for her Majesty's green velvet hunting-coat and her large brown felt hat gave her, for all the world, the air of a young gallant; and Hal, riding beside her, straight and proud, wore the same cut of coloured jerkin and his hat was similar. The story went that a stern old Calvinist dame of Rotterdam had once journeyed to see the Queen of Bohemia, believing that this idol of the Puritans would be a severe and hideous object, which

would probably have edified the ancient lady's orthodox soul. But, alas! she had waited on the Lange Voorhout to see the Queen ride out, and after the cavalcade had gone by, and she had been asked what she thought of her Majesty, she had answered wonderingly that she still waited to see the Queen, for as yet she had only viewed a troop of gallants riding past. Then when they had told her that the foremost "gallant" was Elizabeth of Bohemia, she had refused to believe them; and poor, honest old lady, she had waited many hours till the Queen had returned from the chase, and when she had made sure that "the Lord's handmaiden" was this graceful being in the man's hat and coat, she had thrown up her arms, calling God to witness that His ways were manifold and wonderful, but that, in her poor understanding, God and the Puritans had made a mistake this time.

The Queen entered into all Prince Hal's pastimes, forgetting for a while the drudgery of poverty, the disappointment of high hopes, the sorrow of her memory of the Halberstädter. It was one of those friendships between mother and son which onlookers call foolish favouritism, but which is perhaps the purest love—the sweetest companionship that this world holds. He was her knight, her consoler, her joy, and he loved her with an exalted worship, pure as the knightly ideal itself. When he had been but a little fellow, and they had laughingly asked him whom he would wed, he had always answered proudly: "I am going to marry mother." And now that he was no longer a child, his answer was ever: "As I cannot marry my mother, I shall stay single all my days."

Sometimes the Queen sighed, thinking how these were the sweetest hours of Hal's life for her; he was so absolutely hers now, and the years must rob her of this entire possession. He would always give her a great love, but he would belong to another woman some day, and the mother would take the second place. It is nature's inexorable law, she knew, and she gave a tender thought to Louise Juliane and smiled, and a compassionate thought to Elizabeth of Brunswick and sighed;

then her heart drew itself together in a spasm of sudden anxiety, almost fear. What must it be to see the son of all your hopes lie dead?

One January day the Hague was in a turmoil of excitement, the streets were crowded with a stream of laughing holiday-makers, the church-bells rang out, patriotic Dutchwomen hung gay carpets out of their windows. News had come that the fleet had returned from the West Indies, and hard on the heels of the messenger who had brought these tidings came another rider, who told how fifteen mighty Spanish galleons rode at anchor in the Zuydersee, prisoners of the Admiral Pete Heyn. At last the dream of avarice was an accomplished fact: Spain's silver fleet was captured. For years men had spoken in hushed voices of the vast treasure which each year was conveyed to Spain from out the Indies—ships laden with silver, with gold, with pearls, with priceless cargoes of indigo, of sugar, of precious woods and rich furs. For years stories of this treasure-fleet had stirred the imagination of the Dutch nobles and merchants until it had become a tale, an Eastern fable, a phantasy of untold wealth. And Holland went mad with joy, expectation, excitement, when the news came that this floating treasure-house really lay on the waters of the Zuydersee. The Hague seemed peopled with half delirious men and women. Flags flew on hovel and stately mansion; bonfires were lighted at street corners; there was frantic, riotous rejoicing. The fierce factions of Calvin and Arminius forgot their polemics for a while —the treasure of the world glittered in their thoughts, and their dazzled souls turned from contemplating the glory of God, that glory which, of course, in the estimation of each sect, belonged only to themselves and was the glow of hell-fires to their opponents in theology. Pete Heyn the cabin-boy, who had risen to be an admiral, was the hero of the hour. What mattered it that he had performed a hundred far more heroic deeds? Heroism was glorious, but unremunerative, while this easy capture of untold wealth gave him for the moment

a popularity as ardent as had been that of William I., the Deliverer of Holland. Everybody felt himself to be an incipient Crœsus that January day. Many songs echoed through the streets.

"Piet Heyn, Piet Heyn,
Zijn Naam is klein."

The refrain of the popular song was yelled on the Plaats and the Vijverberg, from the Spui to the Kneuterdijke. Street vendors shouted a jumble of numbers written on the freshly printed sheets, giving the latest estimates of the West India Company's dividends. The shareholders would reap a harvest of fifty per cent. Eldorado had come to Holland. "Huzza! Huzza! Piet Heyn! Lang zal hij leven!"

The tumult echoed through Elizabeth Stuart's parlour at the house on the Lange Voorhout, where my Lord of Carlisle, newly arrived at the Hague, was seated beside her telling her the news of Whitehall. He told how the English Puritans made no secret of their satisfaction that Henriette Marie's first child, a boy, had been "born, baptized, and buried the same day;" and how they still prayed that God would see fit to bestow the English crown upon "God's pure handmaiden," Elizabeth of Bohemia. The Queen had always indignantly silenced these too zealous well-wishers of hers. She knew that King Charles was a faithful son of England's Church, and that his leaning to Popery was a Puritan invention.

"Ah! my Lord of Carlisle," she said, "I grow so weary of religious factions! These godly Puritans have made me out a theological marvel, and thus I am often plagued here in Holland with sour-visaged pastors, who discuss with me the tenets of Master Calvin and the opinions of Arminius." She laughed. "I pray to God, and try to do my duty; and I care so little what Master Uyttenbogaert believes about the Holy Trinity, or Master Smout of Amsterdam preaches concerning Predestination!"

Lord Carlisle leaned back in his chair, and gazed at the Queen adoringly. He was an ill-favoured man, of sallow

skin, whose features Elizabeth Stuart had adequately described when she had named him "Pig's-face." He was famed as being an honest, if incapable, diplomatist, and the most lavishly dressed courtier of his age. His ostentatious splendour was a trifle vulgar, but it was redeemed by his kindliness and a certain indolent integrity.

"I know nothing of theology, your Majesty," he said lazily, "save that its discussion is mighty tedious."

Their talk was interrupted by Prince Hal, who dashed into the parlour with flushed cheeks and eyes dancing with excitement.

"Mother, mother! Give me leave to go with the King to see the Silver Fleet on the Zuydersee. My father has decided to start to-morrow with Christopher Dohna! All the town is going! Madame ma mère, give me leave to go!" he cried.

She drew him to her gently. "You would see the Spanish galleons, son of mine?" she said, "and why not, since their advent will help me pay the butcher's wife, who had an all unqueenly audience of me again yestere'en!" She smiled up at the tall lad. "I warrant, Hal, you care little that the capture of the Silver Fleet means that the West India Company will pay your mother fifty per cent."

"I want to see Piet Heyn and the shining cargo, mother," the boy cried, brimmed up with enthusiasm. At this moment the King entered the room. After the usual raising of difficulties, which is the accustomed attitude of the Teutonic father towards any pleasurable excursion proposed by his offspring, King Friedrich consented to Prince Hal accompanying him to the Zuydersee on the morrow.

"You had best read a treatise on shipping to-day, Hal," he said; "thus you will combine pleasure with profit. It was thus that I learnt much in my boyhood at Sedan."

Immediately Hal, who loved all appertaining to the sea, began eagerly to recount the rigging and displacement of Piet Heyn's ships. King Friedrich, who knew as much of seamanship as he did of the mountains of the

moon, listened, half-proud of his son's intelligence, half-embarrassed by the knowledge that Elizabeth Stuart, amused if irritated, was observing "father schoolmaster hiding his ignorance from the young by pomposity," as she was wont to say.

Friedrich, Prince Hal, Dohna, and a few gallants started betimes the next morning. They were to journey by road to Amsterdam, where a small schooner awaited them, placed at their disposal by the States-General.

The Queen bade Prince Hal farewell merrily, telling him, with a smile, not to be a foolish babe, when he vowed that his interest had near vanished since she would not go with him.

"Do not sail away with Piet Heyn to capture another treasure fleet!" she said, laughing, and then whispered to him: "I weary when my Hal is not with me."

She settled down to a couple of days' uninterrupted enjoyment of her old friend Carlisle's conversation, for the weather had broken, and the unsmiling skies did not tempt her to her usual sledging. It was very homelike and restful in the house on the Lange Voorhout, although the velvet hangings were growing threadbare and the golden fringes on the chairs were tarnished and ragged in places. Already the exiles' poverty was evident in the stately rooms. But, after all, a few years must see their Majesties' return to Heidelberg. Monseigneur de Richelieu seemed to be more than ever inclined to a favourable policy for England; he was doubtless displeased by the increasing prosperity of Austria. Any war against the Empire would mean the renewal of the efforts to regain the Palatinate for its rightful owners.

Carlisle and the Queen discussed all this, sitting warmly beside the open fireplace in the parlour, while the wind shook the casements with angry gusts, and sent the raindrops pattering against the window-panes. The Queen shivered a little.

"I love the still, winter days of snow and frost," she said; "these gales from the sea, sweeping over the Hague are unfriendly visitors. I have ever dreaded a sea-storm.

Perchance I have inherited my mother's terror from when she crossed in a furious tempest from Denmark to Scotland to wed my father."

Carlisle laughed. "An ill thing, your Majesty, if we must be heirs to our parents' fears! But the House of Stuart hath ever had strange knowledge of the past and of the future," he said lightly. A fierce gust of wind shook the casement, and like a horde of tiny furies the raindrops attacked the window-panes.

"Nay, foreknowledge is a vain imagination," the Queen said. Then suddenly she cried out, "Ah! I would the King were returned; he has been ailing lately, and this storm will beat against his ship on the Zuydersee."

"He should be far from thence by now, madame. Surely he will return here to-night?" Carlisle said.

A silence fell between them. The Queen leaned her cheek against her hand, and gazed into the leaping flames on the hearth.

"Yes, he will return to-night. I would he were already here," she said slowly.

. . . . . .

Like a thief King Friedrich stole into his own house. The driving wind proved a good ally now, for its moaning hid the sound of steps on the gravel path, and the creak of the house-door. Dohna was with him and a couple of serving-men. The house lay in darkness save for the faint flicker of a rushlight in the vestibule, where a lackey waited up, in case his Majesty should return. It was long past midnight, and the Queen had retired to rest, believing that the King and Prince Hal had taken shelter from the storm, and were lying at Amsterdam. Dohna drew the King into a small parlour near the house-door.

"Bring food and wine," he whispered to the serving-man. "Go quietly, above all do not let any one arouse the Queen."

Friedrich flung himself into a chair, and covered his pale face with his shaking hands. "Oh God!" he muttered hoarsely, "must this befall me too? How much more? God! God!" his voice rose to a wail.

"Be silent, sire; would you have the Queen learn this awful thing without warning?" said Dohna almost roughly.

"I can never tell her—who can tell her? Why am I alive to bring her such tidings? I could not save him—Dohna, will she ever know that I could not? He was sucked down with the sinking ship—the waves ran so high—you saw it too? Dohna, did you hear him cry out: 'Mon père, mon père! Sauvez moi'? Were you in the wreck? I forget." He raved on piteously, weakly, his words so jerked out between his sobs and the chattering of his teeth, that they fell indistinct and thick like a drunkard's speech.

The serving-man brought wine, and Dohna held a goblet to the King's lips and forced him to drink a few drops, though his own hand trembled so that he knocked the goblet's rim against the King's teeth. Dohna, too, had been in the wreck, but, being carried away by the fierce waves, he had not seen the swift tragedy of Prince Hal's loss. He himself had only been rescued with difficulty by one of Piet Heyn's boats, after he had clung to a floating mast for some time. The catastrophe had happened in an instant. The waves were running high beneath the gale; but, surrounded by the whole of the West India Company's fleet and by the fifteen Spanish galleons, there had seemed to be little or no danger for the small schooner wherein the King and his companions sailed, when a sudden blast of wind drove the frail little ship against a Spanish galleon, and instantly the small craft heeled over, filled rapidly from the rent in her side which the impact with the larger ship had made, and sank in the wild sea, as though pulled down relentlessly by a mighty hand. Ropes and spars were thrown to the drowning men from the neighbouring ships, and most of the crew were rescued, save Prince Hal and the two sailors who stood near him in the stern. It was impossible to reach the boy, who disappeared in the waves with the one despairing cry of "Mon père, mon père, sauvez moi!" to the King, who was clinging helplessly to a broken spar. Prince Hal could swim like a fisher-

boy, but, in that sea and fully dressed, swimming was nigh impossible and he was drawn down by the suction of the sinking ship.

During that terrible night Dohna had to listen to the King's endless recapitulation of the miserable story, and to his feeble, bitter self-reproaches. At dawn Christopher Dohna left him with a serving-man and hurried to the Golden Head, the inn where my Lord of Carlisle lay. Some one must tell the Queen—the King could not—dared not. Somehow the fickle, over-dressed, over-perfumed, ostentatious courtier Hay, Viscount Doncaster, Earl of Carlisle, seemed to be the only person who could undertake this awful task. The Countess of Nassau was away from the Hague. Could her Highness Amalia of Orange tell the Queen? In the midst of his sadness, Dohna smiled as he hurried down the Hoogstraat to the hostelry. Her Highness of Orange had never forgiven the Queen for a remark her Majesty had been overheard to make to my Lady Phyllis Devereux as they left the Binnenhof after visiting the Princess of Orange, who, proud mother of her first child, had lain a-bed.

"Poor Amalia!" the Queen was reported to have said; "she is very well in health, but oh! how ugly in that hideous, plain bed-gown! Why must virtue so often drape itself in thick linen, alack!" There had been a coolness between the ladies since that day, which was not lessened by the fact that his Highness the Stadthouder remained the Queen's admiring partisan, and, whenever he had paid a fleeting visit to the Hague during the protracted siege of Hertogenbusch, he had always repaired to the house on the Lange Voorhout to offer his faithful homage to his cousin's wife.

"My dear husband is so kindly to the poor Queen," Dohna had once heard her Highness remark, and her accent of sour pity had seemed an insult to its object. No, the Princess of Orange was scarcely the person to break the terrible news to her Majesty.

. . . . . .

They told her in the morning that the King had not

yet returned, and she rose and dressed as usual, gave her commands for the day, ordered the servants to prepare for the dinner the dishes which the King and Prince Hal preferred. They would surely be home that day, and would be weary and hungry after their long jaunt. She noted that her tiring-woman's eyes were reddened with weeping.

"What is amiss, my poor girl?" she said kindly; but the woman had the wit to tell her that she had quarreled with one of the serving-women, and the Queen inquired no further.

They came and announced that my Lord of Carlisle was below and craved audience of her Majesty, and without anxiety she went to greet her old friend.

She came gaily into the parlour, which on that clear morning was flooded with sunshine. She said lightly to him that she was still a deserted wife and mother; laughingly averred that the King must be robbing the Silver Fleet, as he stayed away so long. Then, seeing Carlisle's white face, she cried out that he was surely ill, and, when he shook his head, she stopped short, like one who suddenly sees the brink of an abyss.

"Carlisle! what have you come to tell me?" she asked. And then—somehow—he had told her, told her, he said afterwards, "like a fool or a brute."

"Madame, there has been an accident on the Zuyder-see. Your son is drowned—" He thought she had not heard him, for the smile on her lips remained unchanged; she was like one turned to stone with that gay smile untouched, save that it seemed to be fixed for ever.

He told her all he knew—of the wreck, of the surging waves, of how the King had been barely rescued. She uttered no word, but gazed at him as though he had spoken in an unknown tongue. And then, very quietly, she sank down at his feet like a broken flower.

For days she lay insensible. Perchance some angel who had been a woman once, had laid a merciful hand upon her, stilling her consciousness—some angel who knew that there are agonies too great to bear.

The King kneeled at her bedside, moaning and weeping, praying her not to desert him too; but she lay with her still, white face upturned to the embroidered baldaquin of the four-poster bed, her long brown lashes sweeping her cheek, her lips calm as the lips of the dead.

As one who wakens from sleep, she came back to life at last. She knew them all, but she was very weak physically. She never spoke, and they had the mercy to let her be. Dohna took the King away to Rhenen. The physicians said that she was so weak that a further strain would leave her hopelessly insane.

She lay there quite still, tearless, silent. They thought she had forgotten the awful message which my Lord of Carlisle had brought her.

One morning, about six days after they had carried her to her bedchamber, she was lying as usual motionless, seemingly detached in mind and soul from all the world. Beside her bed was Carlisle, who had prayed to be allowed to watch over her while her ladies breakfasted. The door was standing a little ajar; it creaked, and a blunt, brown nose pushed it open, and Prince Hal's spaniel crept in. Carlisle held his breath. The dog had never left the boy, and since his death he had wandered about the house, piteously seeking the little master he would never find again. Perhaps Hal's dog would recall the mother—ah yes! to agony, but to life. Carlisle's right hand caught the delicate lace of his sleeve-ruffle and twisted it to a string. The sweat-drops stood out on his sallow face. He deemed that on what happened now depended the sanity of Elizabeth Stuart.

The dog sniffed about the room seeking, ever seeking, his dead master. Deliberately, wagging his tail, he came up to the bed, and, standing on his hind legs, he laid his soft fore paws on the embroidered coverlet. The Queen opened her eyes, feeling the weight on the coverlet and hearing the rasp of the paws against the satin. Slowly her hand went out and rested on the dog's smooth, silky head, and she spoke in a weak, thin voice as of one who is returning from mortal sickness:

"Brady! poor one, what is it?" The dog whined piteously and clambered awkwardly up beside her, nozzling his blunt nose in her white, listless hand.

Carlisle bent forward. "He seeks him, madame; he seeks Prince Hal!"

She turned her great, sombre eyes upon him with the despairing glance of a hunted deer at bay, and then her look travelled down to the dog. He gave a short, sharp yap, and looked at her questioningly.

She sat up weakly and drew the animal to her. "Brady dog—Brady dog!" she said, and the poor beast whined again, hearing the familiar name, for his master had always called him "Brady dog," and the Queen's voice was so like Hal's.

Then, at last the Queen's strange apathy broke, and the tears came. She fell back on her pillows, weeping wildly. The dog, whimpering, crept close, and she put her arm round his neck and held him to her. My Lord of Carlisle rose noiselessly and slipped from the room, closing the door carefully behind him. "My God, I thank Thee," he said solemnly.

. . . . . .

There was not only pain in Elizabeth Stuart's heart, but an infinite yearning pity for the child thus wrenched away from all he had been taught to trust. She agonised at the thought of Hal whom she had sheltered, whose weakness had ever clung to her strength, being flung out to battle alone in the world of the dead. In vain she told herself that God Almighty gathers the dead into His safe keeping—she was always tortured by the vision of the boy striving towards her with outstretched, imploring hands and questioning eyes. She saw him bewildered—lonely. She heard him call to her: "You who have never failed me, you whom I trust, will you fail me now? Why am I abandoned?" She pictured to herself those beloved brown eyes gazing over the crest of a ruthless wave; she heard him cry out, "Mon père, mon père! Sauvez moi!"

At times a passion of rage and scorn against King

Friedrich filled her. He had heard Hal calling on him for help, and yet he had lived to say: "Our son is dead —I could not save him."

It was nothing, she told herself, that she missed the boy, that each hour brought her as a physical suffering, a stab of memory of happy days, the remembrance of trivial things, of shared pleasantries, of the little commonplace sayings of companionship. Though this was pain unutterable, she felt that because it was her own pain she could bear it, nay, would master it, so that bitterness should not mar the beauty of her memory of her first-born. Her first-born! God never gives so fair a gift as a woman's first-born child—and if He takes it back—may He have mercy on each mother who must suffer this awful grief!

Yet Elizabeth told herself proudly that she could bear all things—there was no limit to courage—but that which tugged at her heart-strings because it was not her own pain and she might not assuage it, was the pain that she feared for Hal. She knew not if he suffered, yearned, was afraid, or, pray God! was at peace? No price would have been too great to pay for this knowledge, she thought. Surely, surely, the wealth of love and sorrow which she gave must be counted as payment for peace and some fair beatitude for him, wherever he was?

"God, God of the sorrowful," she prayed, "let me suffer, but give him rest." And she listened for some answer, sought for some certitude—she, the reasonable woman, who knew that there is no answer and no certitude on earth.

The dull days of grief went on. She thought she had lived a life's span since that far-off terrible day. But there comes a time when the soul cannot, nay, will not suffer more. It is as if the well of tears were dry, as if agony had exhausted the power of sorrowing.

> "Il faut parler de chasse et non de larmes,
> Parler d'oyseaux et de chevaux et d'armes,
> C'est trop pleuré."

Yet it is no merciful indifference which comes to the stricken heart, but rather an impotence to suffer more, a desperate clinging to the joy of life, an almost frenzied turning to gaiety or its semblance, And, indeed, there is healing therein, for Time is thus given respite to work his will. Time and Sorrow are combatants, and Sorrow thus temporarily paralysed, Time gains a slow victory.

So it was with Elizabeth Stuart, and though her eyes were full of despair, her lips learned to smile again, the lassitude of body left her, and she took part once more in hunts and merrymakings. Some who saw her mocked. "She is soon cured," they said. But those who spoke thus were the men and women who, being incapable of fierce suffering, did not know that unless merciful death comes swiftly to the deeply stricken, there is an absolute necessity for the strong natures to return to the fulness of life. They cannot creep about, these strong ones, cannot crawl through the days whining. As the strong body must take nourishment to live, so must the strong soul drink of the fountain of occupation and joy—or go under in madness.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WINTER KING

"O weary life! O weary death!
O spirit and heart made desolate!"

—TENNYSON

ONCE more the exiled monarch's hopes revived. The increasing power of Austria had long displeased France. The Hanseatic League, though traditionally loyal to the Empire, had bitterly resented the Emperor's attempt to tamper with the freedom of their trade in the North Sea and the Baltic. Upon their refusal to allow their ships to be under an Imperial Northern Admiralty, Wallenstein, created Duke of Mecklenburg since his conquest of that dukedom in the name of Austria, had beleaguered the Hanse town Stralsund, whose citizens had called in the aid of Christian of Denmark and of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. After a prolonged siege the Imperial troops had been withdrawn, Denmark had made peace with the Emperor, and the Northern Admiralty scheme had been temporarily abandoned.

It had seemed as though peace approached at last, when in March, 1629, the Emperor promulgated the Edict of Restitution, and it was clear that the cessation of hostilities was but a lull in the storm. Even Ferdinand's own advisers urged him to withhold the Edict, which all knew must cause the continuance of war; but Ferdinand now dropped the mask of toleration which he had worn so long, and revealed himself as the fanatical servant of Ultra-Romanism and as a greedy amasser of wealth for the House of Hapsburg. The Edict decreed the restitution of all Church property held by the Protestants even in the Protestant countries of the Empire:

archbishoprics, now the appanage of princes, bishoprics, monasteries, broad acres of Church lands which had been sequestrated at the Reformation. These, for the most part Ferdinand bestowed, in anticipation, upon his eighteen-year-old son Leopold William, despite the Church's decree interdicting the accumulation of Church dignities and wealth upon one individual, be he prince or priest. From every side the Edict was greeted by a storm of rage. Even the Pope, seeing that the Hapsburg intended to garner the rich harvest, expressed his disapproval. This fresh Imperial aggression decided Gustavus Adolphus to oppose the Emperor by force of arms. The Austrian Baltic policy had been a distinct menace to Sweden, and if Northern Europe was to share the fate of Bohemia and be made Catholic at the point of the sword, Gustavus Adolphus's right to the Swedish crown was challenged. The Emperor had ever refused him the title of King, which he gave to Gustavus Adolphus's Catholic cousin, Sigismund of Poland, from whom Sweden's crown had been wrested by the Protestant Charles IX., father to Gustavus Adolphus. Poland and Sweden had long been at war, and the Emperor had repeatedly sent monies and troops to Sigismund. Gustavus Adolphus now concluded a treaty of peace with Poland, and prepared to take the field in the name of oppressed Protestantism.

King Charles of England, engaged in negotiations with Ferdinand, refused to take part in the coming campaign; and Richelieu, although he looked favourably upon any enterprise calculated to harrass the Empire, considered Gustavus Adolphus as a condottiere of the type of Mansfeld or of Bethlem Gabor, another brilliant adventurer who would flash through Germany and then gutter out like a torch before the mighty breath of Austria's power. Therefore, though Richelieu sent a large sum of money to Gustavus, France officially held aloof.

Towards the beginning of July 1630, Gustavus Adolphus, with thirteen thousand men, landed on the coast of Pomerania. At first the campaign went rather tamely, and Gustavus only gained small victories, although the Im-

perial troops were half-hearted in consequence of their leader Wallenstein's absence. He had been recalled by Ferdinand to answer the charges brought against him by the electors in conclave at Regensburg. Ferdinand, desirous of procuring the nomination of his son as King of Rome, was truckling to the electors upon whose vote this nomination depended; and although he, in obedience to their wishes, dismissed Wallenstein, the electors refused him their votes. Wallenstein retired to Prague, and Tilly, now an old man of seventy-four, was placed in command of the Imperial forces in his stead.

Meanwhile the citizens of Magdeburg, fearful lest by the Edict of Restitution they should be forced to accept the return of a Popish archbishop, had declared for Gustavus, and had placed their city in a state of defence.

In the late autumn of 1630 Gustavus, having conquered Pomerania, at last marched southwards, but still no decisive action was fought, although the Swedes succeeded in taking Frankfort on the Oder. In May 1631 Magdeburg fell before Tilly; the inhabitants were cruelly massacred, and the whole town burnt in spite of Tilly's efforts to check his brutal soldiery. There followed the battles of Werben and of Leipzig. The victorious Gustavus then marched through Thüringen and Franconia to the Rhine, and invested Mainz and Frankfurt on the Main, where he decided to remain in safe quarters for the winter.

John George of Saxony, alienated from the Empire by Ferdinand's refusal to cancel the Edict of Restitution, had sent his army to serve under Gustavus; these troops the Swedish king had despatched soon after the battle of Leipzig to hold Prague in the name of Protestantism. Gustavus now invited King Friedrich to repair to Frankfurt to join in the great campaign against Romanism and oppression. The Swedish monarch, who had once been a suitor for the hand of Elizabeth Stuart, proclaimed himself to be her champion—his sword should redress her bitter wrongs, he would win back a kingdom for her, he fought for her and the Protestant faith.

Charles of England still refused his aid, and her Majesty wrote to him a little bitterly that, if he "did nothing but treat," she and her family would remain for ever a burthen upon him. Angrily King Charles cried out that his sister misjudged him; with an exchequer over two millions in debt, how could he undertake to support an army? He granted permission, however, to James, Marquis of Hamilton, to raise a troop of volunteers, and he managed to screw a decent sum out of his exhausted treasury, but even this was done under the seal of secrecy, for England was in treaty with Austria.

Yet surely the dawn of a brighter day was breaking for the exiles.

"We cannot always be unfortunate!" the Queen cried. "Every dog hath his day, dear my lord; and sure, our day is coming."

But Friedrich gazed gloomily through the rain-blurred parlour-window. "We had our day at Heidelberg—it will never return to us," he said.

"Courage!" she cried half-angrily; "the States have voted you a hundred and fifty thousand thalers; they have given you two thousand of their best cavalry as escort; our kind, dull cousin of Orange hath given twenty thousand thalers — in spite of Amalia, I'll be bound! Come, poor sad one! all is going well. Courage!"

He came to her, and, kneeling down beside her, he rested his brow on her shoulder. "Dear heart," he murmured, "my mind misgives me. Methinks misfortune is a bad habit which we have fallen into. I have hoped so often that I am afraid of hoping."

"Friedrich, this is weakness!" she said gently. "You are too strong to give in to hopelessness."

"I strong?" he laughed bitterly. "I sometimes think that my very life depends on your strength, and that, if you were far from me and illness came, I should die just because you were not near."

There was something infinitely pitiful in this avowal, this relinquishing of all dignity of being by a man who usually cloaked his weakness by a pompous assumption

of manly independence. What he spoke was true enough, and both he and Elizabeth Stuart had long known it. But there are some things which must never be put into words, or that which was a tacit understanding becomes an open degradation.

Elizabeth had lately given birth to another child. "Pray God, it is not the commencement of a new dozen," she had said, with one of her whimsical smiles, for though sorrow, despair, and humiliation had swept over her, her sense of humour never failed her. "You see, I am ever of my wild humour to be merry," she had once written to Louise Juliane, who had sighed when she had read the words, thinking that Elizabeth Stuart was incurably frivolous, though even her Calvinistic soul, half-surprised, had paid tribute to this dauntless woman.

There was tremendous excitement in the Hague over the preparations for the King's departure, and daily recruits came in offering their services. A whole army corps could have been enrolled, but Friedrich dared not saddle himself with too large a force, as his funds were inadequate to support more than a hundred horse.

For years a veritable troop of young English gentlemen had come to the Hague, ostensibly to learn the theory of warfare under Frederik Hendrik of Orange, who had shown himself to be a worthy successor to his brother Maurice, and there were even some who said that his military prowess, though less showy, was more efficacious than his predecessor's. Be this as it may, the Hague was filled with young foreigners studying strategics, and haunting the "Bohemian Court." Among them was Sir William Craven, the son of a rich London merchant. He had served with distinction under Frederik Hendrik at the protracted siege of Hertogenbusch, and returning to England with letters of warm recommendation from his commander, King Charles had conferred a peerage upon him. But a magnet drew Lord Craven back to the Hague. He was still a youth, for he had been only sixteen when in Holland, and Elizabeth Stuart had scarce noticed the gentle, quiet boy with the steady grey eyes. But a patient

devotion had grown in Craven's heart for the exiled Queen. Very short and slight, he ever looked younger than he was, and gradually she grew accustomed to his quiet presence. King Friedrich liked him, and he was constantly invited to the house on the Lange Voorhout. "Little Craven," and "the little man," she called him, and she treated him almost as a child.

When it was settled that the King was to join Gustavus Adolphus, Craven prayed to be allowed to journey to the camp as one of his Majesty's own gentlemen, and somehow Elizabeth Stuart felt that she could let Friedrich go forth with a quieter heart if the "little man" went with him.

The Hague citzens gave the King an ovation. Enthusiastic crowds lined the streets, flags flew, the church-bells chimed merrily. In the Council Chamber of the Binnenhof the States-General assembled to bid him God-speed. The grave, black-clad burgesses bowed before him as though he had been already a hero returned from victory. It seemed as though the whole world was assured that at length the unfortunate monarch's luck had turned. And Friedrich, ever easily elated and as easily cast down, caught fire from their warm confidence and promised a speedy return.

"My reverend sirs!" he cried, "I doubt not that 'twill be but a few months ere I come to bear away her Majesty and my children to my reconquered dominions, yet I would pray a last favour from your unfailing bounty, this: that you should guard the widow and the orphans until my glad return." He spoke half-jocosely, and the ill-omened words fell heedlessly from his lips, but some among his hearers wondered that he should speak thus; yet, for the nonce, amid the general acclamation the strange saying was forgotten in the interest aroused by the speech made by Jacob Cats, the Pensionary of Dordrecht, who had been chosen by the States as spokesman that day by reason of his known friendship with their Bohemian Majesties.

The King marched out of the Hague with his hundred

THE KING OF BOHEMIA.

After a picture by Miereveldt in the Collection of the Earl of Craven at Combe Abbey.

mounted gentlemen and the large escort provided by the States-General. The cannon boomed royal salutes, the populace shouted, and the joy-bells rang. Friedrich King of Bohemia was setting forth to claim his own again, the Protestant champion was going to join the new Protestant hero. The time of tribulation was nigh ended.

. . . . . .

Good news came to the Hague, the King had arrived safely at his Majesty of Sweden's winter quarters in Frankfurt, and had been received with regal honours. Gustavus Adolphus had insisted on his taking precedence over all, had styled him "Majesty," and had sharply reprimanded a Saxon gentleman who had called him "your Highness." Friedrich wrote that there were gay doings at Frankfurt in honour of the Queen of Sweden's arrival. He told how there had been a masquerade, and that Gustavus Adolphus had donned the woollen hose and white apron of the innkeeper's son; that her Majesty, Queen Eleanor, had dressed as a Swedish peasant woman, and that he, Friedrich, had disguised himself in a monk's cowl and gown. There had been great hilarity, he said, when it had been seen how monklike he looked, he, the champion of Protestantism; and King Gustavus had laughed and declared that Friedrich had betrayed himself, he was really a Jesuit in disguise and no Calvinist. Elizabeth Stuart smiled and sighed when she read this, smiled at the unwonted gaiety of the tone of Friedrich's letter—sighed because she realised that the debonair youth she had married was now a sad-faced man, hollow-cheeked, and with deep, sunken eyes, who would in a monkish garb fulfil the Protestant's notion of a Jesuit: a sombre, haggard, furtive being. But all this would change when fortune smiled again, she thought, and surely the hour of triumph was not far off now. At the news of each victory the Queen's confidence grew. The town of Kreuznach had fallen, and the "little man" Craven had so distinguished himself by his dash and courage at the assault, that the King of Sweden had laid a kindly hand on his shoulder and had told him that he

seemed determined to give some younger brother a chance of inheriting his wealth. After the conqueror's entry into the city, King Friedrich had been enthusiastically acclaimed by Hamilton's Scottish troops. The day of triumph was dawning.

A check came to the Queen's elation; there had been a fire at Heidelberg, and much of the castle had been destroyed. It was said that the Spanish garrison had set fire to it, fearing lest it should fall into the hands of the avenging Protestant hosts.

"We will rebuild it next year, dear my lord—be not downcast," she wrote to Friedrich, for none doubted Gustavus Adolphus's ultimate victory. He would brook no half-hearted allegiance on the part of the Protestant Princes, who were now, at last, united for the Cause. Even his brother-in-law, the wavering, specious George William of Brandenburg, had been forced to declare against the Emperor. To effect this, indeed, it had been necessary for Gustavus to march to Berlin, but, when the dreaded Swedes had appeared before the walls, George William had decided to throw in his lot with the Protestant army. It was whispered now that the Swedish king intended to proclaim himself Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; it was known that Richelieu had offered to procure his nomination as King of Rome. The dream which lived in the Swedish hero's mind was doubtless to found a Northern Empire comprising all the German Protestant States and excluding only Austria and Bavaria, which would remain under the sway of the ancient Southern Empire. He had planned to unite the Houses of Vasa and of Hohenzollern by marrying his six-year-old daughter Christina to Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, son of the Elector George William; Pomerania was to fall to them by treaty on the death of Duke Boguslav, and Denmark should be annexed by a future war. All the princes of Germany should swear fealty to Sweden, and the free towns and lay bishoprics should also be under the protection of this mighty new power. There should be an Imperial Diet at Stockholm to which each prin-

cipality should send delegates. It was, in fact, the dream of empire which, in part, has become reality under the descendants of that very Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, though it has come about without Sweden's participation therein. Soaring plans, indeed, and surely calculated to awaken the alarm of France.

The Emperor's cause seemed to be in an evil plight; the Spanish troops were needed for the relief of Maëstricht in Holland, closely besieged by Frederik Hendrik of Orange, and Gustavus Adolphus held nearly the whole Rhine Province and threatened the Bavarian frontier. In March 1632 he entered Nürnberg and was greeted by the populace as the new Joshua. Then he swept on to Donauwörth. Here, too, he was welcomed with rapture. Maximilian of Bavaria trembled for the safety of Munich, but placed his confidence in his army under Tilly which protected the Bavarian frontier beyond Donauwörth. On April 15th Gustavus shattered Tilly's army at Rain, on the river Lech, and the venerable commander Tilly was so sorely wounded that he died a few days later at Ingoldstadt. The Swedish army now took the town of Augsburg, and early in May the victors marched into Munich.

Friedrich of Bohemia had never left King Gustavus's side during this wonderful campaign; and although there had been protracted discussions between the two monarchs as to the future, and sometimes the Swede's evident determination to exact a fair price for his assistance had disappointed Friedrich, still a warm affection and confidence had sprung up between them. Yet deep discouragement peeped through the conscientiously hopeful tone of Friedrich's letters to Elizabeth. From the Nürnberg camp he had written that he would never have believed Gustavus could have treated him "so ungenerously," for the settlement of the Palatine affairs seemed as far off as ever despite the Swede's many victories. He longed for peace, for the ending of all this fruitless endeavour. "Plût à Dieu!" he wrote, "qu' eussions un petit coin au monde pour y vivre contents ensemble! C'est tout le bonheur que je me souhaite."

Nevertheless, as he and Gustavus wandered together through the Bavarian's magnificent palace, Friedrich felt that the Swedish king had already in a measure avenged his bitter wrongs.

There were many Bohemian cannon left at Munich, which Maximilian had captured at the battle of the White Mountain, but the Bavarian jewels were hidden safely away, and with them that jewelled ribbon of the Garter which Friedrich would so gladly have reclaimed. "My good cousin Ferdinand hath taken away his best goods," he wrote to Elizabeth; "there are many handsome things left, but mighty difficult to remove." And then, with a touch of his usual querulousness, he added: "But even were it not so I should have none of them." For Gustavus Adolphus had forbidden the plundering of the conquered cities, and a certain bitterness was growing up in Friedrich's heart against the Swedish King. Friedrich could not learn the simple rule of human life, this—that no one does anything without payment; and he raged weakly that Gustavus gave help, gave vengeance, gave the hope of restitution, but that he openly avowed that he would exact payment herefore, that when the Palatinate fell to Friedrich, Sweden would expect to hold a couple of Palatine towns, certain promises of money and future alliance, and freedom of worship for the Lutherans in the Palatinate, as her legitimate share of the spoil.

In Munich the weary soldiery was permitted a few days' repose, and even the impetuous Gustavus was not loth to rest there awhile, although he was loud in his condemnation of the climate and his disapproval of the scenery round the town. He said that Munich was "a golden saddle upon a sorry nag." It is possible that the lustre of patriotism had dazzled his eyes when he had gazed on Sweden, otherwise this saying, coming from the lips of one who had enjoyed the Swedish climate, is incomprehensible. However, Gustavus's sojourn in Munich was but short, for the Emperor, aghast at the Swede's success, had summoned Wallenstein to his aid. Also the Imperialists had gained some advantage in Swabia, and

Gustavus quickly evacuated Munich, and marched to the aid of the Wirtemberg Protestants.

Wallenstein, meanwhile, had driven the Saxons out of Prague, and had advanced to the neighbourhood of Nürnberg. Gustavus, knowing his army to be too small to risk an attack upon Wallenstein while Maximilian of Bavaria with his troops threatened him from the westward, withdrew into Nurnberg, and for two months the opponents faced each other but remained inactive. At length Gustavus was forced to make an effort to get his troops away from the Nürnberg neighbourhood, which by now was swept bare of provisions; and on September 23rd he attacked Wallenstein, but was repulsed and again fell back on Nürnberg.

He now decided to leave a garrison in the town, and to run the gauntlet along the enemy's lines in order to gain a freer field of action. Wallenstein allowed the whole army to march away unmolested, although the Swedish soldiers constantly fired into his camp. Shortly afterwards Wallenstein marched to Leipzig, which he seized and refortified as a punishment to John George of Saxony for having joined Gustavus. Wallenstein was reinforced by Pappenheim who, foiled in his attempt to relieve Maëstricht, still besieged by Frederik Hendrik of Orange, had successfully invested Hildesheim and was now free to join the main army.

Friedrich of Bohemia had left Gustavus when the Nürnberg camp was raised. Sick at heart and despondent he had withdrawn to Mainz. It had seemed to him that there was but little use in following the fortunes of Gustavus farther. He had served faithfully during the arduous campaign; he was ailing and needed rest, so he averred. In reality a sudden nostalgia had come to him, a longing to be in or near the Palatinate. God knows, it was a melancholy pilgrimage that he made! The once smiling country, rich in waving wheatfields and grandly wooded slopes, the happy, prosperous villages, the stately castles and goodly dwelling-places were now charred, downtrodden waste lands and blackened ruins. The

peasants had either fled or slunk about their ravaged homesteads, miserable and terror-stricken. The King wrote to Elizabeth that he had gone hunting with harriers, and that he had longed "avidement" for her to be by his side. She read between the lines how heart-sore he was, how the sight of the havoc wrought in his homeland had given the death-wound to his already broken spirit. Piteously he assumed a hopefulness she knew he did not feel. "Yet all this would be easy to restore," he wrote; but Craven had written that it would take the lifetime of two generations to re-establish the famed opulence of the Palatinate, and she believed the unostentatious, practical knowledge of the "little man" more than poor Friedrich's feeble optimism.

They were weary days in the Hague. Sophie of Nassau was in great grief for the loss of her husband, Ernest Casimir of Nassau, who had fallen at the storming of Roermund. Amalia of Orange, too, was in a state of depressed anxiety for her Frederik Hendrik, who was still besieging Maëstricht. Her Highness's depression was duly communicated to her decorous Court, and it was the mode for all to go about with faces of woe, and to speak in that hushed tone which is supposed to befit o'erdarkened days. The Queen, of course, would have none of this; she rode out, she busied herself with books and letters, she spoke in her accustomed sonorous tones. Anxiety was hard to bear, as she said, but wry faces and whining voices had never charmed fortune back, or averted sorrow.

Towards the middle of November the news came of the battle of Lützen, the most disastrous victory that an army has ever won: Gustavus Adolphus had fallen. It was whispered that the Swedish hero had been treacherously done to death by Duke Franz Albert of Lauenburg, always suspected of double-dealing and envy of Gustavus. He had ridden at the King's side in the mêlée, and the fact that Gustavus was shot through the back induced many to believe, though no proof has ever been adduced to support, this dark story.

Elizabeth Stuart had once more to face the shattering

of her hopes, for although there had been disagreements concerning the terms of the Palatinate's restitution, she knew that ultimately the valiant Swede would have given Friedrich back his rightful heritage. Death had again fought against her.

. . . . . .

The joy-bells rang in the Hague, the cannon thundered salutes, flags flew from every house, and the streets were full of enthusiastic revellers. Maëstricht had fallen some time back, and Frederik Hendrik of Orange and his troops were returning in triumph to the Hague. Amalia of Orange welcomed her excellent, substantial hero, and there were splendid rejoicings at the Binnenhof; men shouted his name in the streets, and the pealing bells proclaimed the glorious return of yet another great warrior of the House of Orange.

In the house on the Lange Voorhout Elizabeth Stuart listened dully to this tintamarre of rejoicing. She neither spoke nor wept, only from time to time she unfolded the paper whereon were written the tidings of the death of Friedrich, King of Bohemia. It was a short enough missive, penned by Spina, the doctor who had tended King Friedrich, and addressed to Mijnheer Rumf, physician to the Queen of Bohemia. In terse phrases it set forth how the King had been ailing for some time, but that he had insisted upon riding forth to visit his cousin, the Duke of Zweibrücken. On his return to Mainz he had fallen grievously sick, and the doctor, fearful lest he had taken the plague which was raging in the neighbourhood, had examined him and found three plague spots on his body. After a few days the violent symptoms had abated, however, and Spina had believed his Majesty to be on the road to recovery. Then had come the news of the battle of Lützen, and of the loss of Gustavus Adolphus. "His Majesty, lying sick in bed, turned his face to the wall, and moaned out that now his last hope was taken from him," wrote Spina. A few hours after delirium had set in, and on November 19th he had breathed his last in the hostelry at Mainz. There was a

rumour that he had been poisoned, but Spina averred that he had died of plague and a sheer surrender of his energy to live.

Elizabeth Stuart tortured herself with the thought that if she had been with the King he would not have died. Had he not said that his very life depended on her strength? A piteous, unmirthful smile twisted her lips for an instant—she realised that, in the midst of her grief, she was half wroth with Friedrich for having given in to death so easily. The doctor had written that it had been as though the King had surrendered his spirit out of sheer sorrow for Gustavus Adolphus. Sorrow! Elizabeth Stuart knew that it had been the sorrow of hopeless, helpless discouragement. Poor Friedrich! poor, feeble being, tortured by his own weakness!

Her mourning for Friedrich was chiefly an immensity of pity, a longing to help the dependent soul of him who had loved her, who had lusted for earthly power to his undoing indeed—but always for her—to crown her queen, to give her greater honours. She grieved more as a mother grieves for a lost child than as a woman mourns her mate. Her mate? Christian the Halberstädter had been her mate—he alone! And now she was free, Friedrich's weak soul no longer lay on her heart as an abiding task—a beloved task, but a task for all that—but Christian was dead—Christian and Friedrich—and there was no meaning left in life for her.

A touch of horror and of sordidness was added to Elizabeth Stuart's grief, for, as in life so in death, Friedrich's strange destiny of unrest continued. At first the Protestant army requested that the mortal remains of their champion should not be entombed. When victory came his coffin should be borne in triumph before the conquerors! In vain the Queen wrote that he should be laid to rest at Heidelberg in the Heilig-Geist Church beside his forbears. His brother Louis was administrator of the Palatinate, a title surely given in derision, for who could administer a country claimed by a rightful owner, and by a new proprietor whose possession was sanctioned and

upheld by an Emperor, whose technical right of disposal was supported by the presence of an armed host in the disputed territory itself?

Count Louis planned to inter King Friedrich with befitting pomp in Heidelberg; but he hesitated, partly because he wished to content the Protestant army, partly because of his inability to carry out his plan, for the country was overrun with Spaniards and Bavarians.

With horror the Queen realised that some mischance of warfare might place the helpless clay in the enemy's power, and she shuddered at the thought of the insults to the dead which would ensue.

At length she heard that they had carried the King to Frankenthal, that he lay in peace in his own half-ruined castle. But the same despatch told her that the misery-maddened populace had greeted the shabby cortège with howls of bitter mockery, that the coffin had been borne into the castle amid a shower of stones and filth thrown by the people who had once poured benedictions on their beloved Prince, whom, in death, they greeted with such cruel contumely. It was written that the body could not remain at Frankenthal for fear of some ghastly outrage; the peasantry, debased by misery, was furiously hostile—Frankenthal was insecure.

At last, at dead of night, secretly, in haste and fear, they bore King Friedrich out of the half-ruined palace where he had lain; but the people had heard what was to be done. A snarling crowd gathered before the portals, and, amid yells and foul imprecations, the rough cart with its helpless burthen was driven away into the night. Yet, even now, the cruelty of Fate had not done with Friedrich of Bohemia. The cart was but a couple of loosely nailed boards, and the driver told afterwards how "the restless prince could not lie still," for many times the ricketty wheels had stuck in the ruts of the ill-tended roads, and the coffin had been flung into the mud.

Some three years after his death the unhappy King was laid to rest. The homeless wanderer could not even find the refuge of a grave in that homeland he had learned

to long for, that homeland which he had bartered for a shadowy crown. At last he was entombed in Sedan; but men had lost all interest in Friedrich of Bohemia, and it was not deemed of sufficient importance to chronicle where he lay. Who cared, after all, save the sorrowing woman far away in Holland, made helpless by distance and powerless by poverty?

And thus to-day no one can point the finger of scorn, or bestow a look of pity on the tomb of Friedrich of the Palatinate, the Winter King.

CHAPTER XXIII

D'ESPINAY

"Mourir pour ma belle
Tra-la-la."

LONG years had passed, and still Elizabeth Stuart waited at the Hague for the ever-deferred return to Heidelberg. The world had almost forgotten that she was only a visitor in Holland, and her Court on the Voorhout was universally recognised as a centre of culture. It was the fashion for travellers to pause a few days at the Hague and to be presented to her Majesty. It did not signify that the house on the Lange Voorhout had grown very shabby, with tattered viol-brown velvet hangings and threadbare chair-covers; it did not matter that her Majesty's debts were so numerous now that, as she put it, she was fully accredited to the debtors' prison! The entrée to her Court was more sought after than an invitation to the Binnenhof, where Amalia Solms ruled in solid, comfortable splendour.

Somehow, albeit Elizabeth Stuart had said adieu to youth, she remained the queen of charm, the romantic figure it was profoundly interesting to have seen. Travellers like Mister John Evelyn, on the grand tour, hastened to kiss her Majesty's hand, and he recorded the fact in his diary among the accounts of all the remarkable things he had seen on his travels.

Sometimes it seemed to Elizabeth Stuart as though her whole strange past had been a dream, some romance she had heard. All the actors in that Prague drama had vanished from her life. Old Anhalt, after years of wandering as a proscribed rebel, had received a free pardon from the Emperor, and had retired to his castle

of Bernburg, where he had lived in entire seclusion until his death in 1630. Christel, too, at last set free from his prison in Vienna upon parole never more to fight against the Emperor, had withdrawn to Bernburg, and had married a princess of the House of Holstein-Sonderburg. He had passed as utterly out of Elizabeth Stuart's life as though he had indeed perished on the battlefield of the White Mountain. "Alas! I am as useless to you as a dead man!" he had once written to her, for each year he wrote her a formal letter which, for all its brevity, still let her know that she, and she alone, was the romance of his life. Yet he never came to Holland, but remained faithfully with his Eleanora of Holstein and his monotonous existence. The Thurns, father and son, were dead. My Lady Phyllis Devereux and the other ladies-in-waiting had long left her and were married in England. Her Highness Louise Juliane was dead. Elizabeth Stuart lived now with a new young world; she shared her memories with no one. Often she spoke of old days with faithful little Craven, but he, too, only knew her life since her sojourn at the Hague.

Her Majesty's children were grown men and women now; mighty troublesome, too, they were. The princes, turbulent and ardent, were the acknowledged ringleaders of the riotous bands of young nobles, Dutch and foreign, who were at the Hague. Not Karlutz, indeed! He had grown into a handsome, self-satisfied man, stern to the failings of others, with a cold pomposity which some took for dignity; strong, because he was absolutely indifferent to the feelings of his companions. "Alas! alas! how narrow-hearted is Karlutz!" the Queen cried to the Princess Elizabeth.

"Madame ma mère, my brother takes his task as head of the house very seriously," the learned maiden answered; and the Queen sighed, for the years had taught her to sigh instead of to rage. She often felt herself to be younger than her own children. Certainly the Princess Elizabeth, with her wise, sober ways and her austere studies, was all unsuited to the Queen's strong, direct nature. Henriette,

gentle and merry, with her fair face and the flaxen hair which she had inherited from her Danish grandmother, was more to the Queen's taste; and Louise Hollandine, gay and disorderly, pleased Elizabeth better than her more demure sisters. When Monsieur Descartes, lean and beetle-browed, came to talk philosophy with Princess Elizabeth, the Queen would whisper to Craven: "Ah! look, I pray you, my lord, at Elizabeth settling the world by a theory! Alack! but her deep thoughts have made her nose red, and yet they cannot assuage her sorrow at this unwelcome colouring!"

But the Queen was interested in Louise Hollandine's studies. She loved to wander about the studio, which she had given to Louise at Rhenen, while Mijnheer Honthorst painted, and talked of his student years in Rome, or explained some technical detail of painting to his pupil.

Little Princess Sophie, sharp-tongued and impulsive, was never a favourite with her mother, and an unspoken tragedy was enacted between them; the child, seeking for love and jealous of the Queen's affection, grew bitter-hearted, and deemed that Elizabeth Stuart loved her monkeys and her dogs better than her children. Yet this thought was unexpressed then; only years afterwards the bitterness came out when the great Electress of Hanover, Queen Designate of England, wrote her memoirs; but that was long after Elizabeth Stuart and her world had passed away, and the dead do not rise up to refute even the harsh judgments of their own children.

Despite the ever-present anxiety of poverty the Queen of Bohemia's Court was gay enough. Many peaceful days were passed at Rhenen, and the Queen almost dreamed herself back at Heidelberg, when she gazed on the mighty sweep of the Rhine, flowing away through the green fields and past the beech-groves. And yet echoes of strife ever came to disturb her. England was in the throes of revolt, really a most distressing episode for King Charles I., though, of course, the whole pother would soon be ended. Prince Rupert and Prince Maurice had fought gallantly in the royal cause, and Elizabeth Stuart proudly heard of their exploits.

"Ah! sweet niece!" she cried out to Princess Mary, William II. of Orange's young wife, Princess Royal of England, "would we were men to lend a hand against these prick-eared rebels! I vow I envy our cousin Charlotte de la Trémouille! What a splendid destiny that gave a woman the opportunity to show such courage!"

"She was ever a trifle mannish, methinks, ma cousine," said Princess Amalia, who was present.

"She is a woman of spirit, Amalia. Lord love us! we can all learn to brew possets and to stitch a seam, but few of us would venture to hold a castle against a horde of rascally besiegers!" the Queen cried. She took a letter from a casket filled with papers.

"Here is a letter from Rupert which tells how, two years ago, Charlotte held out for many weeks; how, at last, my Lord Fairfax went off back to the army, leaving the siege of Lathom House to a wretched old attorney, who had the house attacked with mortar and cannon! Fairfax was ashamed of fighting against a woman, I'll be bound! Rupert had the honour of coming to my Lady of Derby's rescue; at his approach the besiegers slunk away."

Princess Mary's pale cheeks glowed, and her eyes were lit with enthusiasm at this story; but Amalia of Orange looked sour and self-righteous.

"Very fine, no doubt; but scarcely womanly," she said.

"Womanly!" cried the Queen, "the word womanly has been invented by men who want a silly fool to hang about them and humour their every whim. Womanly! why should it be against a woman's nature to behave like a gentleman?"

"I do not understand your Majesty," said Amalia in a disagreeable voice.

"I never thought you would, cousin," answered the Queen good-humouredly, "but this I tell you, that if women can save England, the King is not in so sorry a plight after all! I hear that even Cromwell's womenkind are Royalists at heart, and my Lady Fairfax is so openly loyal, that my lord is much embarrassed thereby."

"It is surely unseemly for a female to oppose her spouse," said Amalia sharply. "I should never question the Stadthouder's wisdom."

"You get your own way generally, my Lady of Orange, for all your wifely submissiveness," the Queen said impatiently.

"I trust I am never unwomanly," retorted Amalia.

"No, ma cousine, you are never unwomanly," the Queen answered quietly.

. . . . . .

None doubted that the rebellion would be crushed in time; yet Strafford had gone to his death; Laud, too, had been sacrificed, and civil war raged over the length and breadth of England. At Marston Moor "God had made Prince Rupert's cavalry to fall like stubble" beneath the rebels swords, and at Naseby the King's army had been entirely vanquished. Montrose had been defeated at Philiphaugh, but the King was now safe in the hands of his loyal Scotsmen, and surely a few months would see the end of this disorder and trouble. That summer of 1646 Elizabeth Stuart lingered on at the house on the Lange Voorhout. She heard the English news more promptly in the Hague than at Rhenen, and albeit she was so hopeful of the swift settlement of affairs, she was anxious and ill at ease. Rupert was in France, "disgraced for the one prudent act of his life!" as the Queen said, referring to his surrender of Bristol to the Parliamentarians. Edward was in Paris, caressed and approved by the whole French Court since his abjuration of Protestantism and his marriage with Anne de Gonzaga. Maurice, too, was wandering about somewhere in France.

Heavy thunder weather brooded over the Hague, even the freshening sea-breeze after set of sun only gave respite. All day the Queen remained in the panelled parlour, with the ragged brown-velvet hangings drawn across the windows to shut out the heat. It was intolerably dull at the Hague. The Binnenhof Court had removed to Honsholredijk, the Stadthouder's newly built country palace. Frederik Hendrik, always a martyr to

gout, had suddenly failed in health, and prematurely old, he had entirely resigned his will to the outwardly submissive ordering of Amalia Solms.

In the small parlour, where years ago Dohna had ministered to King Friedrich that stormy midnight after the accident on the Zuydersee, Louise Hollandine had set up her easel, and was busy drawing a chalk study of Princess Sophie. Louise's gown was crumpled and untidy as usual, and her lace collar was torn. Her brown hair was ruffled, and a smudge of charcoal blackened her cheek. Sophie watched her lazily, she noted each detail of her sister's untidy appearance, noted too, the dinginess of the chairs and table-covers in the small parlour. The door stood open, and they could hear the sound of Princess Henriette singing softly to herself as she sat before her embroidery frame, in the embrasure of one of the passage windows overlooking the courtyard. There was a heavy stillness in the air.

"What can we do to-day? It is too hot to live!" said Sophie; "and oh! Louise, your whole face is black!"

"Turn your head more to the left, mon enfant, and don't gabble," Louise Hollandine said abstractedly.

"Is that hateful d'Espinay coming here to-day as usual?" the girl asked crossly.

"Monsieur d'Espinay must come each day to speak about the horses, why else is he Master of the Horse? I cannot think why Elizabeth and all of you are so harsh about him," Louise answered.

"He is a scurvy knave!" the girl broke out hotly.

"Tut, tut, Mistress Pert, such names from a young maiden's lips!" said Louise, laughing.

"I hate him, and so doth Philip."

"Philip and you are foolish children; d'Espinay treats you as such; that is why you honour him with your disapproval," Louise said shrewdly.

A step-fall came on the stone floor of the corridor, and Elizabeth Stuart entered. She had changed but little during the years. Her figure had grown ampler, her brown hair was streaked with grey, and her face was

paler than of yore, but the great sombre eyes were as brown as ever, and the haunting Stuart smile still played about her lips.

"Alack! children," she cried, "I vow I am weary of your sister Elizabeth; she has sat motionless these two hours reading, bent over her books. Where is Philip?"

"He has gone a-riding in the Bosch with the Prince of Portugal and Monsieur de Pellnitz," said Sophie.

The Queen's face darkened. Young Emanuel of Portugal was the son of that illegitimate Prince of the House of Braganza who had married a penniless and ill-favoured Princess of Nassau, and after an absurd attempt to claim the Portuguese throne, had settled in the Netherlands. The younger Emanuel did not share in his father's political ambitions; it was enough for him that kinship gave him the entrée to the Binnenhof. He spent his time at the Hague, this riotous, dissolute youth who had sustained a leading part in every broil of the last six years. He and Prince Maurice had been among the young bloods who, some five years since, had held up the Portuguese minister's coach as this fussy, ceremonious diplomat had driven one night down the Voorhout—a foolish prank, only meant to annoy the minister; but swords had been drawn and angry words had passed, and shortly afterwards a Portuguese gentleman had challenged Maurice; a duel had been fought, and, the Portuguese having been run through the heart, Maurice had been obliged to leave the Hague. The Queen had never forgiven Emanuel for, as she believed, encouraging Maurice in his wild ways. And now young Prince Philip and he were boon companions! As for Pellnitz, he was an overgrown schoolboy, bragging, self-assertive, with a round, silly, pug-dog's face, "not a bad boy, but unfortunately a consummate ass," as the Queen put it.

She sat down on one of the dingy chairs in the little parlour, and calling her spaniel, a descendant of "Brady dog's," she stroked his head gently and lovingly, as though she found comfort in the touch of his silky hair.

"I cannot think why Monsieur d'Espinay has not been

here to-day. I had somewhat to say to him about the chesnut mare," she began.

"Perhaps my sister's amiable manners have kept him away!" interrupted Louise Hollandine. "Our wise Sophie here has just been talking of him in so gentle a way that I was quite touched!"

"Silly child," the Queen said sharply to Sophie, "what can you know of D'Espinay?"

"Princess Smutty Face there loves him!" retorted Sophie pertly, pointing at Louise Hollandine.

"I would have you know that we do not talk of such things, Sophie," answered the Queen; "think what you like, do what you must, but try neither to behave nor to speak like a kitchen-wench."

"Monsieur d'Espinay ought to be punished for his rudeness to me; I am a grown maiden now, madame ma mère, and—" Sophie began impetuously.

"Ah! Sophie, be not so anxious to run away from your childhood," the Queen said a little sadly. "Nay," she added, as she saw the angry tears well up in the girl's eyes, "keep your tears until you are wedded; you will have need of them then."

Louise Hollandine came and sat on the arm of the Queen's chair. "Little mother, tell me if this drawing is good? Oh! Sophie, stop yammering, or your nose will be as red as sister Elizabeth's!"

"You all talk too much of Elizabeth's red nose; she is a handsome woman, and really learned, Rupert says," the Queen remarked. Sophie turned away, and lifting a corner of the shabby window curtain, peered out into the sunlight.

The sound of spurs clanking and a swift, light tread came from the vestibule, and after a moment a lackey appeared at the door announcing that Monsieur d'Espinay awaited her Majesty in the parlour. A flush rose to Louise Hollandine's cheek, and she hastily smoothed out her crumpled lace collar. The Queen rose.

"I advise you to take the charcoal off your face, ma fille, if you are going to see Monsieur d'Espinay. French-

men are particular about a woman's appearance," she said with one of her whimsical smiles, which robbed her shrewd sayings of any hint of harshness.

"I have no wish to see Monsieur d'Espinay, ma mère; he comes to see your Majesty, not me!" Louise answered crossly.

"Foolish child!" the Queen said, laying her strong white hand on her daughter's shoulder; "and yet, ah! why should you not be foolish while you are young? Life teaches grey wisdom soon enough!" She sighed as she left the small parlour. She knew that Louise Hollandine had a fancy for D'Espinay, a fancy which gave interest to the dull, dull days at the Hague. It was a mere caprice, of no importance; Louise Hollandine's was no deep nature which would lead her to the gates of passion and despair; she would have a hundred light fancies.

"'The Princess sighed for the bold cavalier, but he would have none of her,'" recited Sophie in mock poetic tones.

"You are an odious child!" Louise broke out angrily. "Our mother is right when she says you speak like a kitchen-wench."

"Well, Philip says that all the town prates of you and D'Espinay, my noble sister. And they say more—they say mother likes him overmuch, and that Craven is a sad man. They say that our mother may never have put off widow's weeds for our father, but that she gives favours to D'Espinay which are unseemly; they say"—Sophie poured out her silly gossip with all the gusto of a young maiden who does not understand the hideous import of her words. Louise Hollandine turned on Sophie angrily.

"Do you know what you are saying, you forward little hussy? How dare you speak of the Queen thus? I shall tell our mother all you have said!" she cried.

"You may go tell her what you will, and I'll tell her, too, that you make the sign of the cross on your breast before you pray each night! I'll tell her that you are turning Popish, Louise; you know what she felt when Edward became an idolater!" the girl answered shrewishly.

"You would turn spy, would you?" Louise answered haughtily, but she had grown pale.

"The two Princesses Palatine, Louise the Informer and Sophie the Spy!" Sophie cried mockingly.

"What a noise, why must you talk so loud?" came a calm voice, and Princess Elizabeth entered the parlour, a book in her hand.

"Some talk, some read, for their amusement," retorted Sophie, ready as usual with a pert answer.

Louise took the book from her sister's hand, "'Maria Stuart,' by Joost van der Vondel," she read out, "I marvel that your erudite Highness condescends to read such light literature! What would Monsieur Descartes say?"

"Great literature is never light, but light literature is sometimes great," said Elizabeth pedantically, "and this fine tragedy touches our family history too nearly to be neglected."

Louise Hollandine turned over the pages mechanically. Dutch wearied her. In vain Mijnheer Huijghens, their friend and neighbour, recommended the graceful poems of Tesselschade, or waxed eloquent over the beauty of Barlaeus' passionate love songs, addressed to the poetess Tesselschade herself. Louise Hollandine said Dutch was a nonsense language, only fit to talk in, but if you wished to read, then pray read French, if you had not got an English book. Indeed, she scarcely ever read, she painted, and prattled, and laughed with gallants. She had grown a little reckless, too, of late. It had been gall to her seeing her cousin and erstwhile admirer, Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, affianced to Louise of Orange. Heaven knows, he was no pretty boy, this future Great Elector; but he was strong-willed, strong-brained, gifted with the power of engraving his personality upon the lives of all who knew him, and it would have been a brilliant match for the penniless Palatine Princess. But his father, George William, getting wind of the youth's infatuation, had recalled him to Berlin, and but a few years later had arranged a marriage between him and the well-dowered Louise of Orange. George William had ever played an

ugly rôle in the life of Elizabeth Stuart, and almost his last act had been to wreck her daughter's prospects.

Louise Hollandine stood turning over the leaves of Vondel's "Maria Stuart," while she listened to a clear, rather aggressive voice speaking with the Queen in the oaken parlour. Princess Elizabeth, meanwhile, had fallen into a reverie, and stood beside the easel absently crumbling a bit of charcoal between her fingers. Sophie, sitting near the window, still held the fold of the shabby velvet curtain which she had pulled aside to observe the hated D'Espinay's arrival. A shaft of sunshine fell through this opening, and lit Sophie's mass of curling, auburn hair to an aureole. Her inquisitive, round brown eyes now scrutinised Louise Hollandine, and her full lips were drawn into a sneering line.

A lackey came to the door. "Her Majesty bade me tell your Highnesses that the refection is served in the oaken parlour," he said.

"'Now we will arise and seek refreshment of fruits and cool sherbets, even though we eat with the stranger, the Philistine!'" Sophie chanted mockingly, "'and the Princess will hearken to his words, and sigh out her love at his feet!'"

Louise Hollandine shot her an angry glance, but Princess Elizabeth laughed. "Come, sisters," she said, "Monsieur d'Espinay cannot frighten us away from our usual refection! Sophie, be quiet, you tormenting little monster, and do not enrage Louise," she whispered, as they all three passed out of the room.

In the oaken parlour a polished table was set, where, on silver dishes—the few that had not long since gone to the pawnbroker—heaps of peaches and raspberries were piled. A tall caraffe of sherbet, another of pale white wine, and a little flagon of Hippocras were set beside a silver dish, laden with those little *tourtes à la combalet* for which the late Queen, Marie de Médicis, had given the recipe to Elizabeth Stuart when she had passed through Holland some eight years since.

Elizabeth Stuart was seated near the table, a silver

goblet of sherbet at her elbow. She was laughing as the young princesses entered. Monsieur le Comte de l'Espinay, so much disliked by Princess Sophie, sat on a low tabouret near her Majesty. He was a slim, graceful man of thirty-five, dark-haired and olive-skinned, with bold, laughing brown eyes, and a slight, upturned moustache. He was elaborately dressed in the latest mode: a light blue satin doublet, slashed from the elbow nearly to the shoulder to show the delicate linen under-sleeve; lace cuffs, from the wrist to a little below middle-arm; a falling lace collar, jewelled buttons fastening his tunic, his slender legs encased in loose satin breeches, and his boots!—Sophie cast a scornful look at them; if ever a mode was devised to impede movement it was this new-fangled footgear of soft leather boots, square-toed, high-heeled, with the tops wrinkled down to just above the ankle, the inside of the tops broadened out to hold an amplitude of lace frills, and over the instep a wide, ornamented leather flap, which stuck out several inches on each side beyond the foot. On a chair near by was d'Espinay's felt hat, with the little ribbons falling from the rosette beneath the feather; it was of the latest design, of course, with a tiny brim and a very high crown. Across the chair lay an elegant cane with an elaborate gold head, ornamented with a bunch of blue ribbons. Monsieur le Comte's voluminous blue satin cloak was hung over the back of the chair; for, as Sophie guessed, D'Espinay had not discarded it till the Queen had been granted the boon of seeing the Frenchman in his complete new costume. His whole aspect was immaculately careless, a carefully arranged negligence.

He rose as the Princesses entered and made three deep bows, the last, which was to Sophie, being so profound as to seem a mockery.

"Que les fleurs de l'été sont douces!" he said with light impertinence, "to the wanderer in the dusty desert of life, what an oasis of coolness and beauty I have found!"

"You have noticed the coolness then, monsieur?" said Sophie sharply.

"Your coolness, Princess!" he replied to Sophie; "your beauty, Altesses!" he added, bowing to the other Princesses.

Elizabeth Stuart laughed. "Poor little Sophie is troubled with ill-temper to-day, D'Espinay. Give her a *combalet* lemon cake, and then come and talk to me."

Sophie, with tears of mortification in her eyes, subsided into sullen silence, while the other ladies gathered round the table. Louise Hollandine gave the Frenchman a little goblet filled with Hippocras. "You always like this sweet syrup poison best," she said.

"When you give it to me," he whispered. Louise looked at her mother quickly, half-hoping, half-fearing that she had heard the whispered words. The Queen was feeding her spaniel with crumbs of the *combalet* cake, and paid no heed; but Louise's face fell when she saw the expression of D'Espinay's eyes as he watched the Queen.

"What news out of France, D'Espinay?" the Queen asked.

"Ce singe Mazarin! they only write of him in my letters; he is for ever with the Queen they say, and his niece is the little King's playmate. Truly an Italian plague!" he answered. D'Espinay always affected an intimate knowledge of the doings at the French Court, though in reality he knew but little thereof. He had played a foolish part enough in France before he came to Holland. Monsieur, brother of Louis XIII. and father of la grande Mademoiselle, had a court of love hidden away at one of his castles near Tours. Here a certain Louise de la Marbilière ruled, as queen of Gaston d'Orléans' heart, and many gallants from Paris came hither to enliven the Marbilière. Now d'Espinay insinuated himself, if not into the lady's affections, at least into her confidence. He was essentially a man women liked to see and talk with; he was diverting, and understood how to discuss women's clothes. He could dance "like an angel," the Marbilière declared, though it seems unlikely that she was sufficiently acquainted with

the terpsichorean prowess of the seraphim to have been competent thus to appraise D'Espinay's performance. D'Espinay could talk of sentimental depths which ladies believed to be philosophical thought; D'Espinay was deliciously indiscreet under the seal of secrecy; D'Espinay, in fact, was a man whom older women liked, a man with whom very young girls believed themselves to be enamoured. Gaston d'Orléans, however, had found his whispering with the Marbilière to be too familiar, and a *lettre-de-cachet* for "le petit D'Espinay" had directed his unwilling, high-heeled feet to the unperfumed, painfully inelegant Bastille. Here he had remained for a few months, and then a very well arranged amourette with a turnkey's daughter had enabled him to escape. Really it was by this time of no importance to Gaston d'Orléans, or any one else, whether he escaped or not; but D'Espinay arrived at the Hague with a fine story of his hair-breadth escape, and of the consternation with which it had filled his gaolers. The rest of the history, concerning the Marbilière and the turnkey's daughter, he told in confidence to several Dutch gentlemen, instead of publishing it in the *Gazette de France*, and in a few days the Hague knew all he had said—with several picturesque Rabelesian details added. In Paris D'Espinay would have been one of a crowd of petits messieurs; in the Hague he was a personage of note. For his part he thought the Hague provincial—or said in confidence that he did—which impressed and angered the Haguers. Each Hague lady consoled him, and incidentally told him how she could really find no lace collars, no shoe roses, no modish hats or gowns in Holland. Alack! she had to wait to purchase such things from the itinerant French merchants! He affected to believe that these ladies really could not wear a Dutch-made garment; it seemed he had never seen the Amsterdam furriers, mantle-makers, seamstresses entering the portals of the ladies' mansions; which was curious, as his eyes, so languishingly indiscreet in their habitual wanderings, were not prone to fail him. And D'Espinay told each delighted Dutch mevrouw how

much more elegant she was than the Duchesse de Longueville; and as for Madame de Chevreuse, she could not even vie with mevrouw! "Ninon de l'Enclos, how is she?" they would query. "Ah! I never cared for prostitutes, mevrouw! I find the ladies of the Court sufficient!" he would answer; and the good dames preened themselves at this, not hearing the insolence under the flattery.

But amid all his vapid egoism one deeper feeling had sprung up, and that was a blind worship for the Queen of Bohemia, despite her fifty years. She treated him with easy kindness. If he paid her one of his too outspoken compliments she answered him with a shrewd, humorous jest; she often told him bluntly that he was a fool for his pains; yet she suffered him to be much in her company for the simple reason that he amused her, and seeing through his gay, insolent, ceremonious manners, she had found him a kind-hearted fellow enough. One day, chancing to ask him of his youth in France, she had seen the tears spring to his eyes when he had spoken of his mother.

"Ah, madame, it is terrible that I cannot go to pray on her grave," he said; adding: "Ne vous moquez pas de moi, madame."

Elizabeth Stuart had understood that this foppish, effeminate braggart had a real Frenchman's devotion to his mother, that devotion which is so often an effeminate man's one strong feeling.

"Poor D'Espinay!" she had said gently, and had laid her hand on his shoulder, "pray God for your mother. He will hear you even if you cannot kneel at her grave." (Merciful heavens! if the Puritans could have heard "God's own handmaiden" recommending prayers for the dead!) From that day D'Espinay had vowed her an ardent service which had given the Haguers that manna of the mind which they loved so—food for scandal.

Louise Hollandine had a fancy for D'Espinay, and he amused himself with a light intrigue with her, just a few whispered words, sometimes a billet-doux; his touch

lingered a little on her hand when they danced the pavyn or he taught her the figures of the gavotte, that new dance which was beginning to be the mode at the Court of France. She was young and attractive: she liked him—and she resembled Elizabeth Stuart.

That June day as the Queen and her daughters sat there in the oaken parlour, it seemed to D'Espinay that Destiny had been good to him after all; the Hague was dull—"Ah! à mourir jeune," as he said—but all things were bearable, if it was possible to see Elizabeth Stuart each day, as he did now, for since her English Master of the Horse, Howard, had killed a gentleman in a duel and had been forced to fly the country, D'Espinay had been named Master of the Horse to the Queen of Bohemia.

"Yes," he continued, "I hear there are fine stories in Paris about the Queen and Mazarin. Ah, bonjour, Altesse! bonjour, my Lord of Craven!" he added, as Prince Philip and Craven entered the parlour.

Craven spoke to D'Espinay in his friendly, quiet way, but Philip ignored his greeting. The boy's face was flushed, and on his brow the brown hair lay in damp curls; a tall, strong lad, but rather lumpy, with a thick-set figure like his grandfather, James I. of England, but here the resemblance ended, for Philip had a swarthy face, round, dark eyes, and a heavy, lowering look. His grey cloth riding-jerkin was dusty and untidy, his turndown linen collar was crumpled, and his riding-boots were white with dust. The Queen looked at him coldly. She had never cared for Philip, and his rough ways and fierce temper had often disturbed and alarmed her for his future.

"Philip, you are covered with dust; can you not come to me in a more seemly fashion?" she said.

The boy's face grew scarlet. "I am no fine lady in breeches, madame," he said sullenly, casting a sidelong look of hatred at D'Espinay.

"You will do me the favour to brush your clothes before you drink your sherbet," the Queen answered, as though speaking to a naughty child. "Go now, my son," she added quietly, seeing Philip did not move.

He put out his hand to take his tankard of sherbet.

"Nay!" the Queen cried laughingly, "not a drop, my son, until you are brushed!" She took the tankard from his hand. "Go now!" she commanded.

Philip turned on his heel. D'Espinay, who stood in his way, moved aside, but Philip purposely pushed against him roughly, leaving a deal of dust on the arm of the Frenchman's delicate satin doublet. D'Espinay brushed it off angrily, but said nothing.

Now Princess Henriette, entering the parlour, met Philip at the door. "Whither away so fast, Phil?" she said.

"To make myself fit to associate with overdressed coxcombs!" he answered loudly; and passed out of the room.

For a moment silence reigned, and the sisters looked at one another in consternation. It was no light thing to offend the Queen; she could be stern enough once she was roused.

D'Espinay came to the rescue. "The building at the Palace in the Wood goes apace, madame. 'Tis but a few months since your Majesty laid the first stone, and already the outer walls are nigh finished," he said. The talk drifted to other channels. Amalia Solms was, as usual, on no very friendly terms with her daughter-in-law, the Princess Royal of England, and d'Espinay told the Queen how the French Minister, de Thou, who had just been to Honsholredijk, had returned with a story of how high words had passed between the ladies even in his presence.

"My poor niece, alas! she is learning life's harshness soon! But the young ever gain the victory; they have the weapon Time wherewith to conquer the older generation. But 'tis cruel of her Highness Amalia to harry the child just now when she is so beset with fears for her father. Things are not going well in England, alas!" the Queen said.

They talked on peacefully, Louise Hollandine gazing at D'Espinay the while, and the other sisters laughing and talking together.

At length D'Espinay rose to take his leave.

"Come to-morrow at this hour, monsieur, and tell me

how de Thou found the Stadtholder. Alas! I fear his Highness will ne'er see another summer," the Queen said as he kissed her hand.

In the cool, lofty vestibule D'Espinay paused a moment to arrange the folds of his satin cloak. When he approached the house-door he saw Prince Philip standing with his back against it D'Espinay scanned him with an insolent smile.

"Has your Highness turned sentinel?" he asked mockingly.

The boy caught him by the cloak, and half-dragged him into the little parlour near the door.

"I have to speak with you, my Lord Count!" he said as he closed and bolted the door.

"It is a strange way of asking for an interview, monseigneur!" the Frenchman replied.

"You will come here no more, monsieur; do you hear? I know what is said in the town! They prattle of you and of my sister—worse still, of you and of my mother! You will come here no more!" Philip said fiercely.

"Since when do you give orders in her Majesty's house, mon petit Prince?" said D'Espinay, growing very pale. "I shall obey her Majesty's commands and wait upon her when she wills it."

"My brothers are away; my mother's honour is in my care! You will come here no more!" the boy cried.

"Bah! monseigneur, the heat has turned your head!" said D'Espinay scornfully.

"I tell you that, if you come here again, I will kill you, you sneaking French loon!" Philip muttered between his teeth.

"Take back your words, or even from your mother's son I must ask satisfaction," cried D'Espinay.

"Even from my mother's son! What is my mother to you?" Philip said wildly.

"Your mother is the Queen of my Heart!" D'Espinay answered.

"You dare tell me that? What they say is true, then!

God! my mother the mistress of a French renegade!" the Prince said in a hoarse voice.

D'Espinay started. "How dare you twist my words so? Monseigneur, I demand satisfaction! In an hour's time, near the new House in the Bosch—monseigneur, I shall have the honour of defending your mother's good name from her own son's foul insinuations!" He turned away, unbolted the door, and passed into the corridor. Craven was coming along from the oaken parlour, but neither Philip nor D'Espinay saw him.

"In an hour I will meet you, monseigneur, near the House in the Wood! Or shall I send my seconds to you?" D'Espinay said.

"We need no seconds to arrange our duel; sir, are you trying to draw back?" said Philip.

"In an hour, et à la mort!" answered the Frenchman furiously.

. . . . . .

The following morning a group of young men stood beneath the trees on the Vijverberg: Emanuel of Portugal, Pellnitz, Ferdinand Brederode, a few beardless, diplomatic secretaries, the youthful Constantine Huijghens, son to the poet, and several English youths, visitors at the Hague. In their midst stood Prince Philip. He was speaking in loud, excited tones.

"Some interfering fool had sent the town-guard; is that what they say? My Lord of Craven was it? I'll dare swear he'll take the blame to save a pother! But it was D'Espinay himself, I tell you!" he vociferated.

"No cavalier could do such a thing, monseigneur! He is of good blood after all," said a young Dutchman.

"I tell you he had warned the town-guard!" cried Philip. "Emanuel, you thought so, and you, too, Pellnitz! None knew we were to fight. Craven did not know it, so how could he have sent the guard? Only D'Espinay and his seconds knew; they came with him directly, they could not have told any one. Why, the town-guard came close on D'Espinay's heels——"

"I should kill him like a frightened cur, if he behaves

like one," cried the youngest of the group, wishful to show what a manly fire-eater he was.

Philip turned to him. "You are right," he said slowly.

At this moment half-a-dozen finely dressed gentlemen sauntered down the broad walk of the Vijverberg. In their midst was D'Espinay, laughing and talking. Philip watched him approach; then feeling the expectant gaze of his admiring companions upon him, he drew himself up and stepped forward.

"Monsieur le Comte d'Espinay!" he said, "the timely interruption of our meeting yesterday does not annul my interdict. I pray you remember!"

D'Espinay laughed. "We will speak of this with her Majesty, your mother, this afternoon, mon Prince!" he said lightly, and passed on, leaving Prince Philip with lowering brow and twitching lips.

The group on the Vijverberg dispersed. Philip, Emanuel of Portugal, and Pellnitz walked away together.

. . . . . .

That afternoon was heavy and airless, no breeze stirred the trees on the Kneuterdijk, and the limes before the Queen's house were as still as though they had been wooden playthings. Despite the heat, Elizabeth Stuart and the Princesses had driven to Scheveningen.

"I'll sit here no longer, mewed up like an old dame," the Queen had cried.

The whole town seemed deserted—asleep in the sultry air. About three of the clock D'Espinay was seen proceeding down the narrow Hartogstraat from his dwelling in the Papestraat. He was gaily attired, and in the summer sunshine he looked like some flower prince out of a fairy masque, with his rose-satin cloak, his ivory-coloured tunic, and the wrinkled soft boots with the falling lace frills. Monsieur le Comte d'Espinay was going to bestow his beauteous presence upon the French minister, and then later he would visit her Majesty of Bohemia. He tripped onward, humming a gay little tune between his teeth:—

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la!
Mieux vant vivre pour elle,
La! la! la!"

As he crossed the broad road of the Kneuterdijk he glanced at the windows of the Queen's house, which, standing at the end of the Voorhout, commanded a full view of the Kneuterdijk. All the curtains were drawn to shut out the sun, but D'Espinay fancied he saw the curtain of the small parlour-window move, as though touched by the hand of some one watching. Princess Louise Hollandine, perhaps? D'Espinay paused. Should he go in for a few moments and steal a kiss from the enamoured maiden? Her lips were soft and fresh, and if you may not pluck the rose, is it not wise to enjoy the bud's fragrance?

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la!"

No, he must no longer play with the poor little lady's heart—it was unworthy of him; he who loved the Queen could not—. He tripped on and entered the cool precincts of the French Legation.

In the Queen's house the curtain over the small parlour-window was pushed aside, and Prince Philip's dark face appeared in the opening, over his shoulders peeped Emanuel of Portugal and Pellnitz. They whispered together, and Philip pointed towards the Heulstraatje and to the Hartogstraat. Then the curtain was closed once more, and the slumberous calm of the Kneuterdijk was undisturbed.

. . . . . .

Monsieur d'Espinay was annoyed. Really he who spares his head must use his legs! He had forgotten to bring the latest number of the *Gazette de France*, in which there was an account of the oration held at Stockholm on Oxenstierna's elevation to the rank of Count by that wonder of learning, Queen Christina. D'Espinay had promised to show the *Gazette* to the Princess Elizabeth, for of course the two prodigies of wisdom were of interest to

each other. D'Espinay, like King James, disapproved of learned maidens; but it was his habit to be eager in his service even of erudite ladies.

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la,"

he hummed; how that silly little melody pursued him to-day! He took his plumed hat and beribboned cane from the French minister's lackey, and stood, for a moment, on the Legation steps, blinking at the haze of sunshine which dazzled his eyes after the discreet light of Monsieur de Thou's writing-room. Should he send the lackey to fetch the *Gazette* from the Papestraat? No, his blue-satin cloak was lying over his parlour-chair; the fellow might smudge it with his hot hand; D'Espinay would go himself. He flung a silver piece to the lackey, and went down the shallow steps conscious of his munificence.

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la,"

he hummed. He was looking at the lace frills of his boot-tops—how he hoped they would not get dusty before he arrived at her Majesty's house. Pardieu! why had he forgotten the *Gazette?* Busy with his thoughts, he directed his elegant steps to the Heulstraatje; it smelled less vile than the Hartogstraat, he reflected.

"What a pity the town-guard is not here, Monsieur le Lâche!" A mocking voice interrupted his reverie.

D'Espinay started violently. Pellnitz stood before him, blocking the entrance to the Heulstraatje.

"Monsieur, the pleasantry is offensive!" he answered boldly, but drew back when he saw that Pellnitz held a bare rapier in his hand.

"Que diable!" he cried, and clutched beneath the folds of his satin cloak. "Que diable!" he repeated more faintly when he felt that he had no sword at his side—it was not the mode with that style of doublet.

"The pleasantry is ill-timed, monsieur, let me pass," he said waveringly. Pellnitz glanced past D'Espinay;

Prince Philip and Emanuel of Portugal were running down the Kneuterdijk to the Hartogstraat.

"You will not pass this way, sir," Pellnitz said, and pricked the Frenchman's boot-frill with his rapier's point.

"There are other ways," D'Espinay said with affected carelessness. He turned on his heel and went down the Kneuterdijk. When he saw that the Hartogstraat was empty he breathed freer, though he was haunted by the sound of running. He paused; should he go back to the Legation? Bah! he would look like a poltroon before the lackeys! He went on up the Hartogstraat. Unmolested he reached the Hoogstraat; here a number of burgher's wives and busy people hurried along despite the heat. D'Espinay took his lace kerchief from his doublet and wiped his face. It was, of course, the heat which had brought those drops of sweat to his brow. He strolled on a few paces.

"Tudieu!" he muttered, for at the entrance to the Papestraat stood Pellnitz with drawn sword. "Monsieur, this is childish, let me pass!" he cried. "The pleasantry goes too far; let me pass, I say!"

"It is no pleasantry," cried a voice behind him; "cowards are killed like rats!"

D'Espinay faced round quickly. "Monseigneur!" he faltered. Philip stood there with Emanuel of Braganza beside him; both youths carried bared rapiers.

There was a moment's pause. The passers by halted; the women huddled together; one young maiden screamed.

"Where is the town-guard?" called a portly burgher. Philip gave a rough laugh.

"Monsieur d'Espinay knows that best!" he shouted, and pricked the Frenchman in the shoulder with his rapier.

"I am unarmed — monseigneur — I cannot —" he cried shrilly. Philip lunged at him; but D'Espinay avoided the sword's point, and, turning, fled wildly down the Hoogstraat.

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la."

The light melody still sang in his brain—. On he dashed; a child toddled out of a house-door; he knocked it over and it raised a piercing yell. Once he stumbled —"Holy Mary! help me!" he gasped. The frill of his boot-top was torn, and a long jagged string of lace nearly tripped him up. They were close behind him. He ran faster, but he heard them gaining on him. Quickly he remembered that a little seamstress, who was over-fond of him, lived in a common lodging-house in the Halstraatje—the door leading up those public stairs always stood ajar—if he could get there—he could shut out his pursuers. Madness! they could not mean to kill him! He half paused and glanced back; the three young men were almost on his heels; Philip's face was set—it was no pleasantry then?

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la-la."

He sped on—ah! the Golden Head Tavern—he might find a refuge there! No, the door was shut. He felt as if the blood must rush out of his eyes—he was blinded —gasping—spent. He made a rush towards the Halstraatje. What was that? He sliddered—twisted his foot—fell prone over a strong-smelling heap of empty oyster-shells which lay before the tavern. Bah! why must they fling out the oyster-shells after a supper?—it was too hot to eat oysters—there must have been a supper last night—. "Sainte Vierge—Mère de Dieu! Ah!"

Philip fell upon him. Once—twice—thrice he plunged his rapier through the ivory-satin doublet.

Weakly D'Espinay twisted himself round to face his murderer. "Vous avez tort, monseigneur, épargnez moi!" he gasped.

For answer Philip plunged his rapier through his heart, drew it out, and plunged it in again mercilessly.

"Mourir pour ma belle,
Tra-la——"

The blood gushed out of D'Espinay's mouth, and he lay still.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME

"We are the masters of the days that were.
We have lived, we have loved, we have suffered."
—W. E. Henley.

A SHIP rode at anchor on the river Thames beyond Gravesend. The fields stretching down to the banks were whitened by the daisies and the tall cow-parsley, and touched with gold by the buttercups. Such a peace lay over the country, such a fragrancy of Spring. The birds flitted through the air, twittering sharply, and ever and anon came a lazy, ponderous flapping as a gull, returning from some inland quest, winged its way back to the sea. The water lapped against the ship's sides indolently, though often the passing of another vessel made the anchored ship to rock, and strain restlessly at the powerful cable which held her quiescent, and then for a time the water eddied and swirled as though boisterously inviting the ship to follow the stream out to the sea once more.

At the ship's stern there fluttered in the light breeze a royal ensign of sky blue with a lion rampant emblazoned, an unknown flag which mightily puzzled the mariners on the passing ships. However, the merchantmen, seeing that the stranger also flew the colours of the Dutch Republic at her masthead, gave the accustomed salute of courtesy and passed on, wondering what the sky blue ensign could be.

On the deck stood the tall, black-robed figure of an ageing woman; a woman whose auburn hair was thickly streaked with white, and whose face was lined with the ineffaceable imprint of the touch of sorrow; yet despite

the pathos of the face, the brave set of the firm lips and the fearless gaze of the brown eyes told of an undaunted spirit. There was, too, an indomitable, if unconscious, pride in the poise of the head. Though she waited there, a solitary, patient figure, there was something in her whole attitude which said: "I, Elizabeth Stuart, cannot be brought under fortune, save by owning misfortune. What-e'er befalls, I am ready! No one can humble me, though they may insult me."

Hour after hour she waited there, her great brown eyes fixed on the shore. Though no one welcomed her, yet she saw England again, England which she had left nearly fifty years ago, when youth and fortune smiled! It had been Spring then, too, she remembered, but a spring of wild rains, and angry tempests. She had been driven back to the coast, and men had said it was of evil augury for a bride to be thus flung back to her home, but the cannon had boomed salutes as she sailed away, and the populace had thundered a grand farewell to the Pearl of England. And now it was Spring again, Spring and England, and all the world was unchanged, was young, only she was old and sad, and an unwelcome guest it seemed.

At Delftshaven a messenger from King Charles II. had met her, and had bidden her relinquish her voyage to England; but she had thrown back her head with her old, proud gesture, and had cried out: "My nephew cannot forbid me to go home!" Home! was England her home after all? She, the wanderer—she, the exile—had she a home? And yet unfailingly she belonged to the land; the long years had robbed her of joy and of splendour, of love and of honour, but no one could take from her her right to England. She had raged for a moment when King Charles' envoy had delivered the ungracious message. How dared he use her thus? When he had been a homeless exile, a penniless King in a foreign land, had she not welcomed him as though he had been doubly crowned? Had she not told Amalia of Orange, when this lady had asked why she had bent in so deep an obeisance before her own kinsman: "He is twice a King, because

he is crowned with misfortune!" To her the brown-faced youth of evil life, threadbare in garment, a little threadbare in honour, was no less the heir of that kingship by divine right, the very name of which the world deemed to have perished with King Charles I. beneath the traitor's axe.

She could never have believed that her nephew could have ignored her thus. She had sent a frigate on before her with a messenger, to inform his Majesty of her arrival, and she had bidden the Dutch captain to anchor her ship. She would give King Charles time to prepare a fitting reception, and if he did not heed her, at least, she would sail up the river at night-time. No one should see her land, ungreeted and unhonoured!

"It is a good sailing breeze, is it, Mijnheer? You would not waste it? Why should there not be a breeze to-night, when I wish to sail? We will take our chance, Mijnheer." Ah! Elizabeth Stuart, you are, "as ever of your wild humour" to be hopeful, even yet, in spite of the heavy years!

"Madam, I pray you rest awhile; there comes no messenger from the King; do not watch longer," said a voice near her.

"It is not altogether for a messenger that I wait, Craven," she said; "but my heart is very full when I look on England again. Let me be; I am an old woman, but I have come home at last!"

He took her hand, so white against the brown wood of the bulwark where it lay. Very gently he raised it to his lips. "I knew not that you had thus hungered for the homeland, madam," he said.

"Nay," she answered, "I knew it not myself. I am no harbourer of useless thoughts."

They fell a-talking of other things—of how Princess Elizabeth was happy in her Protestant Abbey of Herworden, of Princess Sophie married in Hanover, of Princess Louise Hollandine, Abbess of Maubuisson.

"Craven, I have long ceased raging," the Queen said; "but how strange a destiny it is that two of my children

should have fallen away from their father's faith! Edward and Louise! and yet I have no bitterness against them now. God forgive me! there is but one whom I could never pardon—even now I cannot."

Craven nodded. "Yet Prince Philip fought bravely enough before he fell at Rethel," he said.

The Queen turned away, her eyes had grown hard, and she gazed at the smiling country joylessly now. She had never seen Philip since that day when they had come and told her of how he had killed D'Espinay. She had no mercy in her heart for one capable of so cowardly a crime. When Princess Elizabeth had urged that D'Espinay had maddened Philip by his insolent ways, she had answered that there was no palliation for so dastardly a crime. "If he had crept alone into his house and murdered him, 'twould have been better," she had said; "but three armed men to kill one unarmed man! It is a crime against honour and courage!" Steadily she had refused to see Philip, refused to hear his name, and when Princess Elizabeth had unwisely reopened the subject, praying her to pardon Philip, she had turned on her with such a passion of anger that the learned maiden, in high displeasure, had betaken herself to her aunt in Berlin, and had never more darkened the doors of the house on the Lange Voorhout. Louise Hollandine had wept for D'Espinay for nigh upon a week, and had then forgotten him in her clandestine practice of the Catholic faith, in her painting, and in fancies for a score of other gallants. After some years she had fled from her mother's house with such secrecy that the busy tongues at the Hague had made her the target for their poisoned whispers. The Princess Louise Hollandine had been obliged to disappear in order to hide her condition, it was said. What a pity that the fardingale was no longer the mode! However, this delicate saying was unfounded this time, although Louise Hollandine needed the fardingale some thirteen times in after years, but perhaps her nun's robe, and the seclusion of the Abbey of Maubuisson hid her as effectually as a fardingale.

Sophie, too, had left her mother very soon. She betook herself to Heidelberg, where Karlutz, reinstated since the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, held his Court; a pretty unpleasant Court too; for Karlutz spent his time in quarreling with his fierce-tempered wife, Charlotte of Hesse Cassel, and in a very prolific love affair with her lady-in-waiting, Louise von Degenfeld.

Henrietta, fair and fragile, had at last married Siegmund of Rakoczy, the second son of that George Rakoczy who, on the death of Bethlem Gabor, had been elected Prince of Transylvania. It had been an arranged marriage, and Siegmund had never even seen his bride before she arrived in Sarospatak, but he conceived so ardent a devotion for her that when, some five months after their marriage, she died of fever, he fell sick and within a year followed her to the grave.

Thus the Queen had remained alone at the Hague, bitterly poor and deeply in debt. She had endured the ignominy of being forced to beseech the rebel English Parliament to grant her her rightful apanage as a princess of England. "Necessity hath no law," she had said grimly. Penury had caused her to accept a much smaller sum than was her due, and even this she had owed to the influence of the Puritans, who remembered that she had ever been styled "God's own handmaiden!" Perhaps this truckling to traitors and rebels had been the most bitter of all the bitternesses that she had known; but Karlutz would not help her, Craven's purse was well-nigh exhausted; she had "neither bread, nor flask, nor candle," as she wrote to Craven once, when this faithful friend had journeyed into England to fight for his rightful fortune, which the Parliamentarians were threatening to confiscate, Craven being a "malignant and a friend of the proscribed family of the deceased traitor to his country, Charles Stuart."

If it had not been for the generous help of her niece Mary of Orange, the Queen would have been in the direst straits; as it was, she had but few horses in her stables nowadays, the house on the Lange Voorhout was miser-

ably dingy and threadbare, her servants were reduced in number, and even these few were ill paid—often not paid at all. Princess Mary did all she could, but there were other claims upon her; to her brother, King Charles, to Prince James, and to little Prince Henry she was obliged to send what she could spare. Her mother and her sister Henriette were in Paris in such poverty that they often had no fire to warm them.

Elizabeth Stuart was very lonely. Rupert would visit her when he could; but he was a penniless wanderer and could give her little help. Maurice, brave and gentle, Rupert's shadow, Rupert's faithful follower, had been wrecked when sailing for the West Indies. Rumours had constantly been circulated that he had not perished after all; he was a slave at Algiers; he was held prisoner; he had been seen in Portugal. Elizabeth Stuart set herself to wait; he would come back some day, her little Maurice, to whom she had given the soldier's name long ago at gloomy Cüstrin.

Karlutz had played an unhandsome rôle during the late years. Never really in sympathy with his mother, he had roused her to wrath and scorn by the part he had played in England during the rebellion, for he had sided with the Parliament, had even been suspected of a plot to dethrone his unhappy uncle, Charles I., and, as the Roundheads' candidate, to reign as "Puritan King of free England." During the twelve years of the Commonwealth he had given nothing to aid his unfortunate cousins, and had grudged each thaler he had been forced to send his mother. Harsh words had been written on both sides. Elizabeth Stuart had drained the dregs of life's bitterness; she had learned to be ashamed of those she loved.

If it had not been for Craven she would have been utterly lonely; but "the little man" came to the Hague constantly, and his quiet, unselfish devotion was her one refuge. Sometimes his gentle homage reminded her of Christel's in the fair days at Heidelberg—long ago—long ago! Christel was dead now. In truth he went out of her life before the battle of the White Mountain, yet

she had grieved again when she heard he had passed away peacefully at Bernburg; it had seemed to her that with his death her own past died.

Much, too, had changed at the Hague. After Frederik Hendrik's death the Princess Amalia had continued to reside at the Binnenhof, comfortable, commonplace, dull. Even the short drama of her son, William II.'s life had not seemed to disturb her. Elizabeth Stuart had sympathised warmly with the impetuous youth's ambition, albeit she could not openly side with him, being as she was under great obligations for the benefits bestowed upon her and hers by the States-General during thirty-five years; yet she had understood his haughty anger that one of his House should be obliged to refer all things to their High Mightinesses—understood that he wished to reign as hereditary Stadthouder! Then came his untimely death, and shortly afterwards Princess Mary had given birth to that frail, sickly infant, William III. of Orange, who none had deemed could be reared to manhood. Little did any one think that the ailing child was destined to rule England and Holland with an iron rule!

Duller days than ever had fallen on the Hague, and the Queen smiled when she recalled poor D'Espinay's saying that it was dull "à mourir jeune!" The tedium had been interrupted by the festivities celebrating the Restoration of Charles II. There had been banquets in the Binnenhof once more, merrymakings and rejoicings, and Elizabeth Stuart had seen her nephew, an acknowledged King, sail away from Scheveningen to claim his own in England.

"Come soon, dear aunt; I will make a ragout of the Puritans for your first supper at Whitehall!" he had whispered gaily as he bade her farewell. After a few weeks Princess Mary had also sailed for England, and the dulness of the Hague had weighed like lead on the Queen's spirit. There had come the news of poor young Henry, Duke of Gloucester's death; and three months later the Queen had heard that Princess Mary of Orange had also taken the smallpox and was like to die. Elizabeth Stuart would have sailed then and there for England, had she had

the money, but, as usual, she was penniless. The small-pox is one of Death's swiftest messengers, and in a few days the Queen had heard that Princess Mary was dead.

And now the Hague became insufferable to Elizabeth Stuart. She was too lonely, too weary; and she had decided to journey to England. She had pawned her few remaining jewels, had paid her creditors what she could, and had promised them to return out of England with gold enough to satisfy their claims. She had granted her chief creditors an audience—it had taken place in the courtyard at the back of the house on the Lange Voorhout —for she did not wish them to see how threadbare and frayed were her chairs and hangings; here she had thanked the honest tradesmen for their generous forbearance, and they had withdrawn from her presence, feeling as though they were in her debt, not she in theirs!

With high hopes she had set out, accompanied by Craven. At the outset her buoyancy had been dashed by Charles' messenger at Delftshaven, but she had sailed joyously nevertheless, believing, in spite of experience, that all would be well.

And now she stood on the ship's deck talking with Craven, but watching the coast for some message of welcome, expecting to see a Royal barge skimming over the water.

The twilight fell; she could hear the birds chanting their evensong in a copse near the river-banks. "There is no messenger from the King, Craven," she said, and her voice was unnaturally steady, steady with effort. "It is of no consequence! Tell the captain to weigh anchor, thus we shall land unnoticed."

"It will be much more restful for your Majesty than the noise of a state reception," said Craven, without looking at her.

"I vow 'tis mighty thoughtful of my nephew," she answered; "he doubtless knew that I should prefer to arrive quietly."

Craven bent and kissed her hand, and in the half-light she did not see that his eyes were full of tears.

. . . . . .

The Queen of Bohemia was installed in my Lord of Craven's house, a fine enough mansion, with lofty rooms and a large garden where the last lilacs were still in bloom when her Majesty arrived. The "little man" had bought Combe Abbey many years ago from the impoverished Harringtons, and he had ordered many things from thence to be brought up to London to furnish the apartments which he had placed at the Queen's disposal, thus she found in Craven House chairs and mirrors, and pictures, which she had known in the days of her childhood at Combe.

Two mornings after her arrival she and Craven were together in the "great parlour" overlooking the garden. The latticed windows stood wide open. The Queen was sitting in a tall, walnut-wood chair which she remembered to have been Lady Harrington's. A gentle breeze stirred the crimson silken curtains which bordered the deep embrasure of the windows, and the scent of the lilacs was wafted in. It was very still in the room, for that quiet part of London near Drury Lane, though it was beginning to be the mode, was still but sparsely built over, and each handsome mansion owned a large garden.

The whole preceding day Elizabeth Stuart had "rested." In reality she had waited for a visit from the King; in reality both she and Craven had listened to each footfall in the corridor, hoping that it might be that of a lackey hastening to announce his Majesty—or some envoy from him. But the night had fallen, and still Charles had not sent a greeting to his kinswoman. Craven had prayed her Majesty permit him go to Whitehall to wait upon the King, but she had answered that her nephew was surely giving her time to recover from the fatigues of travel; he would come to her in a few days.

On her arrival at Craven House Prince Rupert had greeted his mother right lovingly, albeit his quiet, stern manner always made him appear cold. His chemical experiments occupied him more than ever nowadays and he told her Majesty that she must not account him churlish if he were not constantly at her side; he had

much business to transact with the ordering of the fleet, which often kept him away from London.

"Oh! son of mine," she said, "think you that I would have you under my wing? The old hen hath hatched out her brood, Rupert; and 'tis but a foolish old hen who raises a cackle after a full-grown young cock as if he were a chick! No, leave that—I understand you, son, leave that, and tell me of this new way of graving which you are so busy about."

He told her of the new mezzo tinto which had been discovered by an artillery captain in the Netherlands, and how 'twould be a perfect way of reproducing even the most delicate miniatures.

Rupert's presence had lightened the strain of waiting for a messenger from King Charles, which both she and Craven had found irksome enough, though, as was her custom, the Queen crushed disagreeable trifles by ignoring them, as she was wont to say.

But this morning, as she and Craven sat together in the "great parlour," there was no Prince Rupert to divert their attention, for he had ridden away the preceding evening to Chatham. For some time they sat in silence.

"Craven, my friend," she cried suddenly, "let us have a jaunt to-day. I'll don my largest velvet mask; you can be masked too, and we'll go to Mulberry Gardens, or shall we find seats in some playhouse?"

Craven looked perplexed. "Punch's playhouse admits no one who is masked—and the cockpit—your Majesty, you could not go there like a stranger; 'tis very like the King and the whole Court will be there——"

"Why not the Duke's Theatre? I have heard 'tis mighty fine," she said.

"It was years ago—" he began, then hesitated; he did not want to remind her how long it was since she had seen London. "It hath grown a trifle—er—dusty," he finished lamely.

"So have I," she answered, laughing, As she spoke hurried footsteps were heard in the corridor, and a lackey came in.

"His Majesty the King has just entered the courtyard, my lord," he said.

"I will receive his Majesty here," the Queen said coldly. Craven hurried away to meet the King at the house door.

King Charles came quickly into the "great parlour." He wore no cloak. His light-blue satin doublet fitted closely to his slight, wiry figure, a collar of fine white lace showed up the olive hue of his thin face, with the harsh, little, black moustache brushed away from his well-cut, melancholy mouth. His large brown eyes were very like Elizabeth Stuart's. He wore his own hair long and curled.

The Queen curtsied deeply; then, as he stood a moment in the doorway, she came towards him with outstretched hands.

"Good greeting to your Majesty," she said pleasantly.

A quick smile of relief passed over Charles' swarthy face. "God's 'ounds! I am right glad to see you, my merry lady!" he cried. "I have been a-walking to Charing to look at my new Barbary mare, and I ventured to come see if your Majesty had arrived."

"My Majesty arrived two days since very secretly, nephew," she said lightly; "and my Majesty was well pleased that your Majesty let me come home so quietly!"

"I believe that my Majesty is a scurvy knave," he answered, smiling; "but I've just had proof again that my Majesty's dear aunt is, as ever, a right witty lady!" He led her towards the window-seat, then paused.

"There is a pack of silly fools who call themselves my dear friends; they wait without to be presented to your Majesty. They are all a-panting from our walk!" he added in a whisper.

She laughed. "Nephew Charles, an you walk at a run, as you used to do, I forgive the poor gentlemen," she said.

"They like it—ah! they affect it greatly—run after me—since I am King!" he said bitterly. "I walked alone before; but 'tis good for the health, sweet aunt, whether you are followed by a pack of panting peers, or walk alone—'tis always good for the health." This last

was spoken gravely, for Charles was always serious when he talked of his health.

Elizabeth Stuart smiled. "Bring in the pack of fools, nephew," she said.

The King went to the door: "Her Majesty will receive you, gentlemen," he called.

About half-a-dozen gallants entered.

"Which of 'em hath not the honour to be known to your Majesty?" the King said.

Elizabeth Stuart scanned the gentlemen. "I need no one to present the Duke of Buckingham to me," she said graciously, holding out her hand. "Alas! sir, changed days since you sojourned in Holland!"

"Ah! madam, 'tis very true," George Villiers answered gloomily.

"He hath long forgotten his love for my sister of Orange, sweet aunt!" the King said mockingly. "Ask him how he fared in France—ask him how sped his wooing of Henriette."

Buckingham flushed angrily. His mad passion for Princess Henriette had disturbed Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans' recent wedding festivities, and Buckingham had been summarily dismissed. He knew that the Court at Whitehall had made merry over his discomfiture, that my Lady Castlemaine never missed an opportunity of uttering a coarse gibe at his expense, that the King vastly enjoyed the pleasantry.

The Queen turned to the other gentlemen. "I think I know your face, sir!" she said to a slight, fair-haired man. "No? yet you are so like that you must be a kinsman of that poor Kinnoul who was so fine an archer? We had many a good hour's shooting at the targets together with my Lord of Montrose years ago at Rhenen."

"He was my uncle, your Majesty; he died of fever at Orkney when he was raising troops for his Majesty of blessed memory," the young man answered.

"At Rhenen he often spoke of his young brother, George Hay; was he your father?"

"Yes, madam."

"Does he live still?" she asked.

"Madam, 'tis thought that he died of starvation. He followed my Lord of Montrose after Corbiesdale; they wandered for days in the hills, and my father fainted for hunger. My Lord of Montrose was forced to leave him, and he was never heard of more."

"And you are my Lord of Kinnoul now?" she said. "Ah! sir, forgive me, but I am like a ghost of the past; I do not know the world of to-day," she added a little sadly.

"You soon will, aunt!" cried the King, anxious to turn the talk to some gayer theme. "See, here is Sir Charles Sedley, a poet with a monstrous pretty daughter; and Sir Anthony Ashley—oh! I forgot—my Lord Ashley! I've just baked him from a baronet to a peer; 'odds truth! but I had to bake him anew, for he smelled musty of stale, sham Puritanism!"

"I am as crisp now for your Majesty's service as I was flabby in the service of the rebels," answered Ashley coolly.

"Tut! man, you have the finest practice of self-service I have ever met," said the King, lolling lazily in the cushioned window-seat. "Will your Majesty do me the honour to come to the Cockpit this afternoon and see a comedy?"

"Right willingly, nephew," the Queen cried. "Craven here was saying this very morning that I could not go."

"That was before his Majesty's visit," Craven said, casting Charles a resentful look.

"Gad's 'ooks! Craven, I love thee! Thou art an honest—fool!" said the King, clapping the "little man" on the shoulder.

That afternoon, towards three of the clock, the King's own carosse with the four dappled Flanders mares was seen driving through the ill-paved streets to the Cockpit. The streets were thronged with ponderous vehicles, which Craven told the Queen were hackney-coaches, and could be hired by any person who could pay their price. Before the theatre was a veritable army of serving-men

struggling and fighting, and dozens of orange-girls yelling their wares in loud tones. At the door of the theatre her Majesty found the King awaiting her, surrounded by a number of gentlemen. His Majesty led her to the centre gallery, and stood leaning over her chair and pointing out the various people of interest among the audience.

"There is Tom Killigrew next to Ashley; to the left is Lauderdale; and there is Roscommon. There stands my Lord of Worcester!" he said. "No, you are looking at old Ormond—a mighty dullard, but good; only he wearies me with his stately ways, you know, sweet aunt. But look at Worcester; ah! we owe him much—so much, that 'tis best to forget it!"

The Queen saw an extremely tall old man, with a small pointed beard and brushed-up moustache in the mode of King Charles I., with melancholy, weary brown eyes under highly-arched, pencilled eyebrows, with an enormous hooked nose.

"Yes, that is Worcester—a nose like a bird's beak, you say, dear Majesty? Yes, but he likes it; for on some old fellow's tomb, some ancestor of three hundred years ago, you may see a monster hook sticking up—so they say. Where is it? Oh! Westminster Abbey, or some such place—I never know these things; but I know old Worcester would give half his face—that's his nose, sweet aunt, ain't it?—to have me see some contrivance he's builded to make wheels run by steam. I can't be plagued to see the thing; but I'll make old Worcester a duke some day, when I've leisure—he's got my father's letter and a patent making him a duke in his pocket now! 'Odds life, they all have claims," he added gloomily, "all of 'em, all of 'em!" He fell to stroking the silky-haired spaniel which he held under his arm. "They'd need three kings and six treasuries to content 'em all," he muttered, and fell into a moody silence.

In the pit the serving-men squabbled and fought: baronets' lackeys fighting knights' major-domos, earls'

outriders jostling barons' henchmen. A ceaseless humming filled the air; loud voices screamed broad pleasantries from gallery to gallery, and the orange-girls plied their trade with noisy effrontery among the gallants who stood about.

Opposite the Queen was a row of empty chairs, towards which she noticed Charles constantly glanced. Now, with a deal of calling out and ostentatious ado, a tall, thin woman with a pale face, light-brown hair, and large, limpid hazel eyes, was led to one of these chairs by a much-bedizened gentleman, whom the Queen recognised as my Lord Duke of Buckingham.

"Who is that with the Duke—methinks I know her face, nephew?" she said; but the King had gone. She saw him threading his way along the gallery towards the lady.

For a moment the Queen sat there alone among that gay assemblage. She saw that all the gentlemen who attended the King had followed him, and were crowding round the pale-faced woman.

"I crave your Majesty's pardon, I was sending a messenger to bring my carosse to drive your Majesty home," said Craven's voice at her elbow.

"Why so, little man?" she asked wonderingly.

"Lady Castlemaine had refused to come to the Cockpit this day—as I heard. But she's changed her caprice, and there might be a desperate pother if she wished the King to drive her in his carosse to supper at Whitehall after the play," he answered; "so I have sent for your Majesty's own carosse—'twill be there an you need it."

"Craven, you are mighty good to an old woman," she said, and there flashed across her lips and eyes that smile which always made her look young again.

"I am there to serve you," he answered in a low voice.

"So that is my new Lady Castlemaine," the Queen said after a pause. "Yes, I saw her once in Holland some years back. She looks mild enough, but they do say that not even an old barber woman of Drury Lane can outstrip her in rough words!"

Silence fell between them, and they watched the gay, restless scene in the playhouse—the inattentive, whispering audience; the gallants on the stage itself, where their crowding almost hid the actors; the actors a motley band, and the "lady" who played the role of a forsaken damsel—a long, lanky figure, whose angular movements, strides, and hoarse voice proclaimed her to be a "boy" of something over fifty years. The performances at the Cockpit were old-fashioned and badly played, though the audience still vastly preferred the antics of the boy "actresses" to the new mode of women playing the female rôles, as was to be seen at some of the other London playhouses.

The Queen's eyes wandered to my Lady Castlemaine and the King. He was lolling lazily beside her, his little spaniel in his arms, and his sad brown eyes gazing absently into the playhouse, while my lady poured forth a torrent of words at him.

"My nephew does not seem to be enjoying himself too much!" the Queen said to Craven.

"Nay," he answered, "Mistress Barbara Palmer's—I implore her pardon—my Lady Castlemaine's service is no light task! But 'tis said his Majesty looked overlong at little Mistress Frances, Captain Walter Stewart's daughter, the other day, and that since then Castlemaine is fiercer than ever."

The Queen sighed. "My nephew is a prey to these women," she said.

"But, madam, 'twill be different when the Portuguese Princess comes and takes her place as Queen," Craven answered.

Elizabeth Stuart shook her head. "Little man, you judge the world by your own good heart and honest habits! But look!" she added, "why, there is Nan Hyde, my royal niece of York! At the playhouse so soon after her baby boy's death! Ah! she's as hard as a pebble, I always thought it when she was lady-in-waiting to my poor niece of Orange at the Hague." She looked across at the Duchess of York, fair, placid, and commonplace.

Suddenly, amidst this world, which was her world, and yet utterly strange to her, a wave of unwonted sadness swept over Elizabeth Stuart. Why had she left Holland, she asked herself? There she knew all the polite world, knew the lives, the characters of the men and women; the older ones had seen her as a young woman, the younger men and ladies she had known when they were children. Now it seemed to her that she had left a home; there she had played a part, whereas here she was an onlooker, here she had no place. At that moment she knew the bitterness of loneliness in a crowd, that loneliness which is nearly fear—almost panic. And now she became aware that thousands of eyes scrutinised her—curiously—coldly. Womanlike she was seized with a terror lest her gown was old-fashioned—absurd. She gripped the arms of her chair convulsively, told herself that she was a fool—an old fool. She saw my Lady Castlemaine looking at her, saw her laugh; Nan Hyde, too, whispered to a lady seated next her, and they both laughed.

The first act of the comedy came to an end, and a greater hubbub than ever arose. Behind her she heard a voice say: "Before the Commonwealth? Lord love ye, before the late king reigned! Why! time of old King James!" She turned her head abruptly; three gallants were wending their way along the gallery. She heard them laughing.

The King came across to her. His face was drawn with weariness; an ugly sneer twisted his lips when he tried to smile at her.

"Will you grace my Palace of Whitehall at supper to-night, sweet aunt?" he said, "it would be mighty pleasant." She read through his kindly intent, knew he was in deadly fear of his mistress's wrath; if she went to Whitehall she would use the King's carosse, and Castlemaine would have to follow in her own coach; if she did not go to Whitehall, the mistress, although she would have had the King's carosse, would torment the King because it would be said that the Queen of Bohemia would not sup in my Lady of Castlemaine's company.

"Nay, nephew Charles, I pray you hold me excused," the Queen said. "I am still weary with travel; would your Majesty permit me to withdraw now? My Lord of Craven's coach awaits me. Nephew, I shall be right willing to sup at Whitehall another evening—you shall choose the company, Charles—you shall choose the company."

My Lady of Castlemaine saw the King bow over the Queen's hand, saw him kiss it twice almost like a lover, before he led her along the gallery to the door. Lady Castlemaine delivered herself of a coarse jest on the subject of amours within the proscribed degrees of affinity, and she was more than usual shrewish when Charles returned to her. The King's whole attitude to Elizabeth Stuart had been that of a man under the spell, not alone of a woman's charm, but of her generous pride of race and easy humorous knowledge of the world.

. . . . . .

Some fortnight after the visit to the Cockpit, the Queen and my Lord of Craven were together in the "great parlour" at Craven House. Spring had hurried onwards, and Summer reigned. The parlour windows stood wide open, and a scent of roses and freshly mown grass stole in. The clear air was full of the quick, soft notes of swallows as they darted past, circled, soared, then flashed away beyond the gardens and the labyrinth of narrow streets between Craven House and the river.

Elizabeth Stuart leaned there in the straight-backed walnut chair. Her strong white hands with the long delicate fingers rested idly on the polished chair-arms, and Craven noted that their delicacy had grown, and that the blue veins showed on them more than ever. He glanced at her face; she looked a trifle weary, he thought, but then it had seemed that King Charles could not have enough of her Majesty's company. He had carried her off to playhouse and opera, had prayed her accompany him to see the royal stables at Charing, to feed the ducks on the water in St. James's Park, had insisted on her watching him playing tennis; she had

been here, there, and everywhere with him, until a pert writer in one of the *News Letters* had written that: "My Lady of C. hath a veritable rival in the Q. of B." Seeing how the King's fancy went, the whole Court gave her much honour, and my Lord Clarendon was heard to declare that he had hopes of his Majesty learning to enjoy decent company yet.

Despite all this homage Craven had seen a shadow on Elizabeth Stuart's face. He knew she was troubled by Karlutz's unchivalrous action in threatening to have her few belongings seized, if she endeavoured to have them removed from the Hague. The things were his, Karlutz averred, and he would have them at Heidelberg. King Charles had written his cousin a peremptory command, and had presented the Queen with some twelve thousand pounds wherewith to satisfy her Hague creditors' most pressing demands. Things were going well at last for her Majesty, yet Craven thought he saw a cloud on her brow, and the love in his heart taught him to understand that she felt herself to be old and out of place in this new, gay world.

As she leaned there in her high-backed chair, listening to the summer sounds in the garden, her thoughts were busy with the past. The swallows' chirping song recalled many scenes to her mind, scenes which only she on earth remembered, and herein is the inevitable loneliness of old age.

She was revisiting Heidelberg—as it had been—as it had been—it was all changed now. She was seeing Prague again—the Hradcány—the Star Palace. She remembered how she and Friedrich had stood together looking from out the window of her withdrawing-room, and that over the Stag Park the swallows had soared uttering this same sharp, hurried song. Once more she saw before her the grand view of Prague—the mighty sweep of the Moldau—the long line of the monastery on the Strahow Hill—the grim squareness of the old mill on the river. She passed her hand over her eyes. What was Craven saying? His voice sounded far off. She called back her wandering attention.

"Oh! my Queen, I cannot bear to see your eyes look so sad!" he was saying. "I know you are oppressed with loneliness sometimes—I know these struggles with the Elector Karlutz are bitter to you. Queen of my life, let me serve you—let me have the right to protect you. Forgive my presumption."

Once before he had prayed her this same prayer, but she had laughingly told him "he had a gigue in his head," and that he had best marry Princess Elizabeth.

"Ah! Craven," she said gravely, "must the reward of all your loving service of me be a cold word of denial? Friend, friend, why must you ask me this? It could be but a monstrous silly thing for June to mate with November! Because of your great love of me, you forget that I am an old woman." She laid her hand on his arm. "Nay, do not shake your head, friend, I am an old woman, and you are young."

"Madam, madam!" he broke in eagerly, "you could never grow old to me! I am no youth, but a grave man past middle age. June and November! Why, madam, I am in the autumn of life too! You can never grow old to me because I love you."

"Yet I am old, Craven, and the world would jeer at you," she answered; "aye, and at me, too, did I become your wife. The world has an ugly, clear vision, and an ugly set of words wherewith to name things! Yes, my lord," she added, "drawing herself up haughtily, "let us be unfortunate if God wills it, but ridiculous never!"

"My Queen," he said humbly, "believe me, I but offer you my poor protection—and all the service of my life. I would never offer you wifehood as to some hoyden girl, madam—you understand? I would but kiss your finger-tips—the hem of your gown—and think myself for this prouder than any lover who may dare to ask and take all that a woman hath to give."

She looked at him musingly.

"And yet," she said after a pause, "and yet the world would count our marriage as a hideous thing."

"What need the world to know?" he cried; "yet if

I had the right I could protect you against a hundred importunities; I could treat with the Elector—only those need know who dare molest you—then I could shield you. Oh! my Queen, all the world knows how utterly I love you——"

"Would it give you such happiness?" she interrupted. "I would fain give you happiness, Craven, but it could be no mating; friend of mine, I am an old woman—it could be no mating." Her hand went up to her breast and touched a little crystal jewel which lay there—a little jewel graven with the name "Elizabeth."

"There is a line of an old song which often rings in my mind, madam, when I think of my love for you," Craven said—

> "The heaven of heavens with heavenly power preserve thee,
> Love but thyself, and give me leave to serve thee."

He hummed the melody softly.

The Queen started up and caught his arm almost roughly. "Not that—not that—do not sing that!" she said, and to Craven's bewilderment he saw how she, who had not quailed before the cruellest sorrows, seemed broken and vanquished by the lilt of an old song. She covered her face with her hands and wept helplessly.

The song had brought back to her, as in a vision, a night of June—June forty years ago. She stood once more with Friedrich on the wide terrace at Heidelberg—she leaned against the parapet and looked down into the silent valley, where the moon had magicked the river Neckar to a silver pathway—the rich fragrance of roses was wafted to her, while from below, in the rosery, there came a young, passionate voice singing that old love song.

Ah God! when life was young, and love was young—how good had been the days! And now all was dead, Friedrich and Christel—and her own youth. The song had come back to her like some ghostly echo of the vanished years. Her yearning turned towards Holland, too, again—to Holland, where she had known the rapture

of Christian's love—she touched the little jewel on her breast and wept afresh.

"What have I done? Forgive me, I will never importune you again! It was insolent presumption, but I only wish to serve you—" he said.

"Craven, my friend," she answered, and once more the witchery of her smile conquered both tears and old age, and made her seem young again, "Craven, you brought my youth back to me; yon song was sung to me forty years ago, when I was young, and I do but weep my lost youth, as all must mourn, methinks, when they know life's fairest gift is faded—faded with the roses of my rosery at Heidelberg, which they tell me Spinola's men trampled down long since."

Craven looked at her questioningly. Suddenly he realised the gulf of years which was betwixt him and his beloved Queen, and the knowledge came to him that love may conquer all foes save that relentless, silent combatant Time. The years that have vanished no man can snatch back, even if he give his soul he may not alter one line of the song that has been sung. Thus the indestructible past rises between old age and youth, a barrier which none can break down.

Craven bent and kissed the Queen's hand reverently. "I will never importune you more," he said gently.

"Nay!" she answered, "I will grant you what you ask. After all, 'tis but a few years that I have to give, but shall I not reward you for so faithful a service? If it would make you happy to be bound to me by God's law, I will right gladly be your wife, and we will go to Combe, and live through the quiet days. Craven, you have given me peace—peace after so many storms." She laid her hands on his shoulders, and drew him to her, looking straight into his honest grey eyes which were a little clouded with tears just then. "God bless you for all you have been to me!" she said.

Thus it fell out that Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, gave her hand in marriage to my Lord of Craven, son of

the draper merchant, Lord Mayor of London, and one of the truest gentlemen that ever lived.

. . . . . .

So she came back to Combe at last, and the long years seemed, for a moment, to have rolled away, and she dreamed herself a little maiden once more. All things were unchanged, the tall trees of the avenue whispered the same secrets beneath the breeze's kiss; they seemed to be the same water-lilies on the moat swaying above the water's lazy play; the same sound of rooks cawing in the trees; the same peace brooding over the red-brick house. She went to her "Isle of Constant Spring," walked through the fields and the old farmstead which she had called "my territories" fifty years ago. She even found the same briar-bush before the old garden gateway, whence she had so often plucked wild roses to carry to my Lady of Harrington, who, she remembered, had once held a wild rose close to her fresh young cheek, and had vowed laughing: "Your little Highness hath stolen its bloom, methinks."

The house, too, was unchanged; sometimes when she passed down the broad, shallow steps of the old stairway she almost glanced over her shoulder to see if she were unobserved, as if she were going to lean her arms upon the smooth banisters, and to slip down deliciously with Phyllis—naughty, laughing Phyllis—sliding after her. She occupied the same room where she had slept fifty years ago; she gazed out at the same quiet fields beyond the sunk fence of the formal garden; she heard the cuckoo calling, and the doves' soft, monotonous song; the well-remembered scent of the jasmin beneath her window-sill came to her.

The only change was made by the things she had brought with her out of her long years of exile, by the pictures of Friedrich, and of the many brave men who had fought for him. One picture there was before which she often stood. This was Mierevelt's copy of his own picture of Christian of Brunswick, of the mad Halberstädter. King Friedrich had caused Mierevelt to paint all

the great leaders who had served him, and the Halberstädter had been among them.

Sometimes in the delicious quiet of the great park a sob rose in her throat. She would fain have given of the amplitude of this peace, of this sweet calmness, to Friedrich, to the poor broken-spirited man who had written to her from a battlefield those sorrowful, humble words: "If God would but give me a little quiet corner of the world to live with thee and rest."

Peace had come to her, did those who had loved her rest too? "Christian, are you at peace? Belovéd, belovéd!" she whispered, and for an instant the potent remembrance of her passion gave the old woman's face as a mirage of the splendour of youth.

On Sunday mornings the Queen drove to that village church at Brinklow where she had so often been as a little maiden. Craven would have fitted up a private chapel for her, but she loved the old-world simplicity of the little Brinklow church, with its uneven floor sloping uphill to the altar; she loved to see the villagers in their smocks, and the rosy-faced children. There was a homeliness mingled with the poetry of the simple service which spoke to her of her vanished youth. As she kneeled there she realised that, hidden deep during the long years, there had always been a homesick yearning for England, for her own country. She told herself that she had paid dearly for the love, the honours, the ambitions, which had been hers, and now all things had failed her—but she had come home. And her heart awoke to a passion of love for England, English trees, English grasses, green and fresh as are no other swards on earth, the song of English birds, for where else do they warble like that? the fragrancy of English lanes, the softness of the suave English air. She wondered if it would be granted to her to live through an English spring once more, to see the pale primroses flung like a fragile carpet of delicious freshness over the earth beneath the trees, and then the blue wild hyacinths—oh! to break off their thick, crisp stems, and carry home a basketful——

She bent her head over her clasped hands, and the villagers saw how her Majesty of Bohemia wept, and thought she mourned her loved ones again, thought she grieved for her lost kingdom, little knew that Elizabeth Stuart wept the forfeited years of that birthright which they, the humble ones, had never bartered, which they did not even prize, perhaps, that birthright of home—of England.

Yet memory was pure of all bitterness to her now. She was weary—she was resting. The long day of her strife was ended, the twilight was falling, and she rested that she might sleep the sweeter when the night came.

. . . . . .

A mighty storm raged over London. The wind tore and shrieked and the rain fell in torrents. The narrow streets were deserted; it was not good to be abroad in that cruel tempest.

In the great gallery at Whitehall King Charles and his Court were assembled. The waxen candles in the wall-sconces burnt low, and at the doors the lackeys yawned and cursed the revelry which kept them thus on duty till so far into the night. My Lady of Castlemaine's little negro had fallen asleep beside one of the pillars, his turban slanted across his brow; one of his embroidered slippers had fallen off and the tired little foot lay bare. Pray heaven her ladyship does not see him 'ere he wakens —she hath a long pin in her corsage which she often uses cruelly; she hath an ivory fan which can raise weals across a trembling black face.

There were many card tables set out in the gallery, small ones where parties of three played gleek, and a long table for lansquenet, where the King had taken the bank. The gold lay in a shining heap beside him; he had opened the bank with a hundred pounds. This was a serious business, and even my Lord Duke of Ormond was at this card-play, but he moved away after he had won a goodly sum.

"Stay, Ormond!" cried the King, "prudence is but ugly when a man hath won! Stay, man, and take the bank!"

"I pray your Majesty to hold me excused. I am weary and would go home," Ormond answered, bowing deep.

"Off then! you will slumber sound enough with those well-won plaques beneath your pillow!" the King said good-naturedly. "I warrant my Lord of Roscommon will take the bank!"

"I'd play with the devil himself, and hold the bank against the minions of hell!" cried Roscommon, who was a little drunk.

"Oh! my lord poet; come and play gleek with me and Ashley," called my Lady of Shrewsbury. "Here is Tom Killigrew talking of late hours and how we should all be abed!"

Roscommon bent and whispered to her.

"Fie, my lord!" she cried, "you bring the blush to my cheek!"

"God's 'ounds, I thought she'd unlearned blushing! Eh? Barbara, my pretty tyrant?" the King whispered to Lady Castlemaine, who sat near him.

She did not answer, her eyes were fixed with an unmistakable look upon young Harry Jermyn, the handsome, fatuous fool whom, it was whispered, not even Princess Mary of Orange—dead now this eighteen months—not even the haughty Princess Mary had been able to resist. The King's eyes followed my Lady Castlemaine's glance. He shrugged his shoulders and sneered.

"There is an ancient dance called 'Cuckholds all,'" he said, with aparent irrelevancy. She heard that and turned on Charles in a fury, pouring out foul words at him beneath her breath; but he only laughed.

"Waller, gentle Waller, come and keep me company!" he called to a gaily attired gallant, who alone of that whole assemblage seemed cool and collected.

"By heaven, man, you are the only sober soul who diverts me!" the King said, as Waller came up to the lansquenet table.

"'Tis not my soul that is sober, sire, only my body likes water better than sack; but my soul is rapturously

drunken when I look on my Lady of Castlemaine," answered Waller.

She tapped him on the fingers with her fan. "I like poets," she said, smiling delightedly, for no flattery was too obvious for her.

"I prefer harlots!" the King whispered to Killigrew, who stood near. "Come, my most honoured lady, and beguile my loneliness over yonder," he said with an exaggeratedly low bow.

"Who plays? Ladies? My Lords? I put down three hundred pounds!" cried Roscommon, slipping into Charles' vacant chair at the head of the lansquenet table. A babble of voices arose as the company gathered round.

"Put Buckhurst in a chair," said Sir Charles Sedley; "he's as drunk as my Lord of Lauderdale himself, but he's sober enough to lose money."

The King and my Lady of Castlemaine wandered away together to a broad, cushioned seat a little apart from the gamblers. Charles beckoned Waller and Killigrew to follow. My Lady of Castlemaine's humour at that moment did not tempt his Majesty to converse alone with her.

"Give me a cup of sack, Tom," the King said to Killigrew; "it grows late," he yawned.

Just then Lady Castlemaine espied the pathetic little figure of the sleeping black boy. "Fetch me that lazy nigger! Fetch him to me, I say!" she cried shrilly.

"Leave him be, Barbara; 'tis past dawn, and he's weary, poor monkey," the King said lazily.

"Fetch him to me—Tom!—Waller!— God damn him, how dare he sleep?" she screamed. The little fellow stirred, and a smile came over his dusky face; he turned in his sleep, and stretched himself. Lady Castlemaine caught up a small silver hand-mirror which lay on a table near her, and flung it full in the child's face.

"Well thrown, my lady!" laughed Charles. The little black boy sat up; his turban had slipped off.

"Oh, oh!" he moaned, holding his shaking hands over his face. "Oh, don't ye beat me, lady!"

"Fetch him to me—you fools—" she screamed again.

The men did not move. The King was laughing nervously. Tom Killigrew stood silent. "Poor little devil!" muttered Waller the poet.

Slowly the negro dragged himself towards Lady Castlemaine; a trickle of blood ran down his face from the cut which the silver hand-mirror had made. He crouched at her feet, holding up his small livid hands in supplication.

"Don't ye beat me, lady—don't ye beat me!" he whined.

She took that long gold pin with the ruby head from out the clustering laces at her bosom. "That will teach you to sleep while you serve me!" she said; and plunged the pin deep into the boy's arm.

He fell flat on his face and lay there moaning.

"Enough, Barbara!" the King said sternly, and drew the poor African to him kindly, stroking his thick crinkled hair almost as gently as he was wont to stroke his spaniels. The boy gazed up into his face with a rapture of gratitude in his rolling eyes.

"Here, nigger!" Charles said, "'tis nothing, little man; better a bleeding face than a bleeding heart!" He gave him his soft linen kerchief. "Wipe off the blood," he said.

The boy caught his hand and kissed it passionately, then, crawling close to the King's foot, crouched there like a tortured animal which has found protection at last.

"You'll leave him alone now, my lady!" the King said, and there was an accent in his voice which caused even Castlemaine to fall silent.

The air was full of the scent of ambergris, and of sweet essences, of laughter and soft whispered words; the gold clinked as Roscommon pushed it to a winner, or drew his own gains from before some loser. Goblets of sack and canary were handed about by sleepy lackeys. Without the storm raged, and the wind, as though mad to enter and attack the revellers, tore at the casements, then baffled, hurried on moaning eerily.

"What is this that I hear, sire, of her Majesty of Bohemia?" asked Waller; "'tis said that since she came hither from Combe last week, she hath lain sick unto death at Leicester House."

"Yes, man, I am right grieved for her; 'tis her lungs, I'm told—a sudden illness," the King began.

"Why is she at Leicester House?" broke in Lady Castlemaine. "She's married to Craven—or worse—why has she moved to another abode? She was sumptuously enough lodged at Craven House, and 'tis waste of good money, I vow, to have two houses!"

"Madam, my aunt chooses to have an establishment of her own," the King said haughtily. "She accepts my Lord of Craven's hospitality in the country——"

"Hospitality!" sneered Lady Castlemaine.

"I would she had deigned to honour my poor Palace of Whitehall. I offered her an apartment here, but she was too ill to be removed from Leicester House," he said.

"La, sire, if you make Whitehall a refuge for the destitute, there'll be no room for other people," retorted Lady Castlemaine; "but I warrant your Majesty only offered the Queen a room to die in—so that a daughter of England should not die in a hired house."

"Barbara, Barbara, I ought to offer you a room in the Tower!" he answered gloomily. He lolled back on the cushioned seat, and, calling his spaniel, which was slumbering peacefully, he lifted it to his breast and held it there with a tenderness he never showed even to women.

Without the wind moaned restlessly. Sir Charles Sedley, who had just taken his leave, re-entered the gallery. He came up to the King.

"There is a messenger from my Lord of Craven, sire," he said in a low voice, "it is old Master Grey, Craven's secretary."

"God's body! let him enter," the King cried. "I am full anxious for news of my Lady of Bohemia!"

Craven's secretary entered, a grave old man, and an avowed Puritan; but Charles, having known him well in Holland, had given strict injunctions he was to go unmolested, for all his Puritanism.

"How now, master?" the King called, as the old man stood hesitating at the end of the gallery. "Come close; we are not a band of robbers who will set upon you! You

came with a message—I trust my noble kinswoman shudders not before this ugly storm?"

"Nay, sire," the old man answered solemnly; "her Majesty of Bohemia is no more. She died an hour since at Leicester House, died sitting straight and brave in her own great crimson chair."

The King made no reply for a moment. The news was sudden and unexpected; for though all knew it was not well with Elizabeth Stuart, none had thought that Death would come to her so soon.

The King rose from the cushioned seat where he had lolled. He put his little spaniel down carefully, then standing very straight, with a proud gesture he commanded silence to the noisy group around the lansquenet table.

"Gentlemen!" he said right gravely, "gentlemen, the Queen of Bohemia is no more. God rest her strong, courageous soul! She hath been braver than many a knight of old; she hath been very unfortunate"—his voice grew husky—"'odds life, I grieve!" he said, and snatched up a goblet of sack which stood on the table beside my Lady Castlemaine. "Gentlemen, I drink to a brave, sweet soul!"

Tears stood in the King's brown eyes, so like those brown eyes just closed for ever at Leicester House, closed in great peace after many tears; yet, in spite of sorrows passing the share of most on earth, eyes which had never unlearned the courage of a smile.

Of a truth Elizabeth Stuart was a brave, sweet soul! God rest her well!

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
Edinburgh & London

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

AC
URL-LD MAY 04 1992

2-WEEKS
URL-LD JAN 19 1995

AC
URL-LD MAY 04 1992

QL
REC'D LD-URL
APR 13 1992

AUG 22 1994

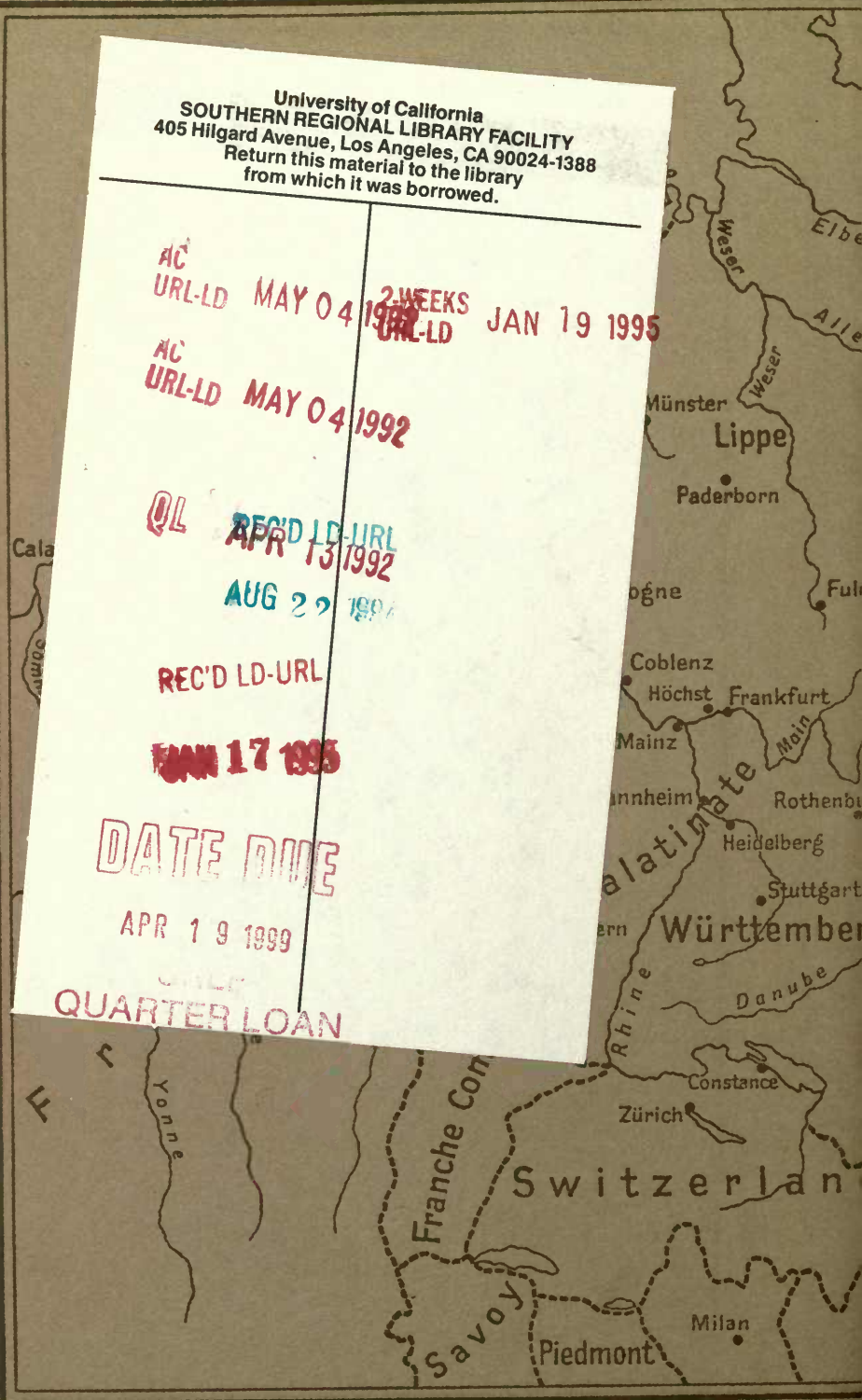
REC'D LD-URL

JAN 17 1995

DATE DUE

APR 19 1999

QUARTER LOAN



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 118 569 3

BRENTANO'S
Booksellers & Stationers.